



Exploring a holistic approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: Evidence report

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i. List of Abbreviations

DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
HE	Higher Education
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer
NEDIAL	Network of EDI Academic Leads
REC	Race Equality Charter
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
VC	Vice-Chancellor

ii. Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all those who participated in the survey, workshops, roundtables and interviews and to those who helped facilitate the workshops and roundtables. We are grateful to the project's Advisory Group members for their support and insights.

iii. Executive Summary

A key commitment in Advance HE's new strategy is to determine the potential to deliver a holistic (that considers equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the broadest sense and a wider range of/all protected characteristics) or integrated approach to EDI accreditation, respecting the diversity of members and their contexts. The intention is to provide greater flexibility and autonomy for institutions in taking forward equality activity in a way that is more strategic, integrated and intersectional, focused on local priorities, and responsive to an individual institution's context.

This report outlines the findings of an independent consultation project commissioned by Advance HE which explored the potential for a new holistic approach to EDI accreditation. The findings are drawn from a survey, interviews, submissions to a call for existing practice and consultation events with a total of 279 stakeholders. The findings provide a comprehensive and in-depth exploration of the stakeholders' views on the potential benefits, opportunities, risks and lessons to be learnt in developing a holistic approach to EDI. Data collection took place between early July and late August 2022.

All respondents reported engaging with an EDI accreditation, with Athena Swan and the Race Equality Charter the most engaged with. The most prominent reasons for engagement were to demonstrate commitment to EDI to students, staff and stakeholders, to help identify that more progress on EDI was needed and to drive forward positive change. The majority of respondents thought their needs were partially met by current EDI accreditations as they provide a useful framework for analysis, assessments and action and help maintain a focus on EDI issues.

Existing gaps or limitations in the EDI work at the stakeholders' institutions and/or countries include a lack of a joined up approach, limited resources, a lack of consideration of intersectionality and marginalisation beyond protected characteristics, and an overemphasis on performative culture. While holistic practices are present to some degree in many institutions, they lack integration and full consideration of all forms of marginalisation for real effective action to happen at the institutional and systemic level.

There was general agreement among stakeholders that a new approach to EDI accreditation is needed. The majority of stakeholders expressed support for Advance HE in progressing with the scoping of a new holistic approach. However, there was also hesitancy and uncertainty as stakeholders expressed concerns about limited resources (funding, dedicated time and specialist staff), the duplication and dilution of EDI work, the vagueness of the term, "holistic", and the applicability of a new accreditation to institutional contexts. Consideration of these concerns are required in any future stages of scoping the development of a new approach to EDI accreditation.

1. Introduction

1.1 Context

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is of strategic importance to UK higher education (HE) providers. EDI is often front and centre in institutional core values and strategies and the strategic responsibility for EDI has shifted in recent years to more senior roles in many institutions. Institutions have developed significant expertise in this area, and many have professional teams supporting EDI. There is commitment and action to advance equality in a range of areas, such as race, gender/sex, disability, LGBTQ+ inclusion, socio-economic status and health and wellbeing. There is also a growth in recognising the need for 'whole institution approaches' to achieve more coordinated and sophisticated organisational approaches to EDI.

Many institutions work with providers to build capacity and obtain external benchmarking and accreditation in specific areas of EDI. Advance HE membership in the UK provides access to the Athena Swan and Race Equality Charters (REC). Previous independent reviews of Athena Swan (1) and REC (2) have demonstrated that they are catalysts for change in relation to gender and race equality. However, they have also identified challenges, including the high workload involved in participation and a need for reduced administrative processes, as well as highlighting the need for an increased focus on tackling inequalities relating to combinations of characteristics (intersectionality). Recent and ongoing developments with both charters are aiming to address these areas, including the launch of the [transformed UK Athena Swan Charter](#) in June 2021 and [ongoing REC development](#) informed by the 2020-21 review (2) and sector engagement.

Geographic and national divergence across UK the HE sector creates different policy drivers and local contexts that shape individual institutional approaches to EDI and therefore relationships with different forms of EDI accreditation. These factors include the development of national specific duties of the Equality Act 2010, different legislation, such as the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act in Wales, or evolution of Access and Participation Plans in England. Macro trends, such as the move towards tertiary education systems in Wales and Scotland, or the call for more provider diversity in England, are leading to a broader range of providers engaged in HE and with Advance HE on EDI accreditation across the UK. At the same time, the UK HE sector faces significant financial headwinds, including from the impact of Covid-19 and inflation, as well as increasing political and policy related uncertainty, which is increasing the emphasis on prioritisation of efficiency.

Against this backdrop, a key commitment in Advance HE's new strategy (3) is to determine the potential to deliver a holistic or integrated approach to EDI accreditation, respecting the diversity of members and their contexts. The intention is to provide greater flexibility and autonomy for institutions in taking forward equality activity in a way that is more strategic, integrated and intersectional, focused on local priorities, and responsive to an individual institution's context. It was envisaged that a potential approach could, for instance, allow institutions to focus on equalities that have most impact for them – be it disability, socio-economic status, poverty, health, wellbeing; it could be a singular focus or combination that suits their context. It could also enable institutions to take a more holistic approach (that considers equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the broadest sense and a wider range of/all protected characteristics) and be more joined-up in their equalities work, which may currently be perceived as being siloed.

Advance HE recognise that any new approach to EDI accreditation may not be the preferred option for institutions. They are clear that if something new were to be developed, it could sit alongside Athena Swan and REC and provide an option for institutions to engage with.

1.2 About the consultation

In early 2022, Advance HE awarded Collaborative Development Funding through a tender process to a team from Newcastle University to run an independent consultation exercise with the sector to inform its next steps, with a representative sector advisory group guiding the work. This was an exploration of the potential for a new holistic approach to EDI accreditation, with an opportunity for as many people as possible to provide their views and shape the next steps.

The consultation aimed to:

- Collate and understand stakeholder views on the range of potential benefits, opportunities and risks of developing a holistic approach to institutional EDI accreditation to sit alongside Athena Swan and the REC
- Gather existing practice and lessons learned from members' efforts to take a holistic and strategic approach to EDI activity, including the work of international members and partners engaged in Advance HE's licenced equality charters
- Produce a robust evidence base to help inform Advance HE on next steps in developing its EDI activity to support the sector to be effective, efficient and impactful

The consultation exercise took place between early July and late August 2022. The overall timeline for the project was June-October 2022.

1.3 Ethics

Ethics approval for this work was received from the Faculty of Medical Sciences, Newcastle University, Ethics Committee (Ref:24034/2022).

1.4 Methodology

The methodologies employed were both quantitative and qualitative. The methods comprised of five elements:

1.4.1 Consultation events

A series of four consultation events aimed at specific stakeholder groupings took place in early July 2022. These comprised:

- Workshop with EDI and charters practitioners
- Roundtable with Senior EDI leads
- Roundtable with colleagues involved in student access, participation and outcomes
- Roundtable with small and specialist institutions, supported by GuildHE

These sessions were all well-attended and delegates represented a diverse range of HE providers. The topics discussed at the events included: what sparked participants' interest in the consultation, what they would like to see or not like to see if a new approach were to be developed, and potential opportunities and risks of Advance HE developing a new approach. The sessions ended with final comments on whether participants supported Advance HE moving forward with further scoping of some form of new approach to EDI accreditation.

1.4.2 Consultation survey

An online consultation survey was open to representatives from all HE providers and related organisations in the UK HE sector between 25 July and 16 August 2022. This was intended to ensure as many stakeholders as possible had the chance to feed in. The questions covered:

- What accreditations institutions currently engage with and how well these meet their needs
- How institutions are currently taking a holistic approach to EDI at an organisational level, and what challenges they experience
- Potential benefits and risks of Advance HE developing a new approach to EDI accreditation
- What institutions might like to see if a new approach is developed
- Any further suggestions or comments

1.4.3 Interviews with Vice-Chancellors and Deputy Vice-Chancellors

To gather views of senior leaders in the sector, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with Vice-Chancellors (VC), Deputy Vice-Chancellors (DVC) and senior EDI Academic Leads. The interview topic guide is available in Appendix 5.1.1. There was also participation from VCs and DVCs in one of the consultation events and the survey.

1.4.4 Interviews with international partners

Advance HE provides EDI charters/accreditation for international HE providers and partners. To learn from their experiences of taking different approaches to EDI accreditation, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with three of Advance HE's international partners. The interview discussion guide is available in Appendix 5.1.2.

1.4.5 Call for existing practice

A call for existing holistic EDI practice that might inform any new approach to EDI accreditation was publicised via Advance HE's website in late May and stayed open until early August. This received only two responses. The time of year of the research and competing demands on people's attention, including from the other strands of the consultation, may have contributed to this response. To make-up for this, the consultation survey included questions on existing holistic or integrated EDI practice, which resulted in a good overview of the types of holistic approaches being trialled by institutions.

1.5 Communications

The project was primarily communicated via a webpage on Advance HE's website from late May 2022. On this page, people were able to register interest in the project and in taking part in particular elements of it. Advance HE also included the invitation to the consultation events and the survey in its newsletters and this was supplemented with targeted emails to segments of its mailing lists. The Newcastle University team used its own networks to further promote the consultation, such as the Network of EDI Academic Leads (NEDIAL) network. Additionally, GuildHE supported communications with its members to reach small and specialist institutions.

1.6 Analysis

The close-ended responses were analysed by job family using frequency and percentage analyses in Excel. The open-text responses were thematically analysed by job family with consideration of how responses could differ by protected and other marginalised characteristics such as gender, race, sexuality, age, disability, class and caring responsibilities. They were analysed through a process of manual indexing (coding, labelling and sorting) in Excel to form an overarching framework of themes and sub-themes. Codes with at least five responses were merged with related codes to develop high-level themes for presentation in this report.

1.7 Survey sample characteristics

Table 1 gives a breakdown of the number of participants by the different consultation approaches.

Table 1: Number of participants by consultation approach

Approach	Number of participants
Survey	225
Interviews with VCs/DVCs	8
Interviews with international partners	3
EDI Practitioners Consultation Event	20
Student Access, Participation and Outcome Consultation Event	7
Small & Specialist Institutions Consultation Event	14
Calls for existing practice	2

In this section, we summarise the demographics of the survey respondents with further demographic details provided in Appendix 5.2.

The survey received 225 responses representing 108 different institutions/organisations. Responses ranged from 1 to 8 per institution/organisation. The sample included a wide range of HE providers, including large and small institution types, all UK nations, as well as a small selection of other providers of HE such as colleges. Job functions of respondents included those from senior management (Chancellor, Pro-Chancellor, Dean, senior Professional Services management) but the most common group to respond were from those in Professional Services with an EDI role.

Within the sample, a higher proportion of participants were female (160, 72.4%) and who identify as women (157, 70.4%) reflecting what we know, that more females are engaged with EDI work. 164 (73.9%) respondents indicated a heterosexual/straight orientation and 18.

The majority of the survey sample was aged between 40-59 years (144, 64%). Participants who disclosed their ethnicity were predominantly white English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish or British (147, 65.6%), just over half (120 of 222, 54.1%) of respondents had no religion.

Just over a quarter (59 of 221, 26.7%) of respondents disclosed that they have an impairment, health condition or learning difference. Just under a half (102 of 212, 49.8%) of respondents disclosed that they have caring responsibilities.

Participants who took part in the interviews, consultation events and call for existing practice were not specifically asked for personal identifying information.

2. Results

2.1 Approach to reporting the results

In this section, we first present the quantitative data from the close-ended survey questions, followed by qualitative data from the open-text survey responses, interviews, consultation events and calls for practice which serve to add more context and details to the quantitative data. Using relevant charts and graphs, the report will focus on quantitative data which have particularly high and low scores in terms of frequency counts and percentages. Illustrative quotes and excerpts from the qualitative data are then provided to supplement the quantitative data.

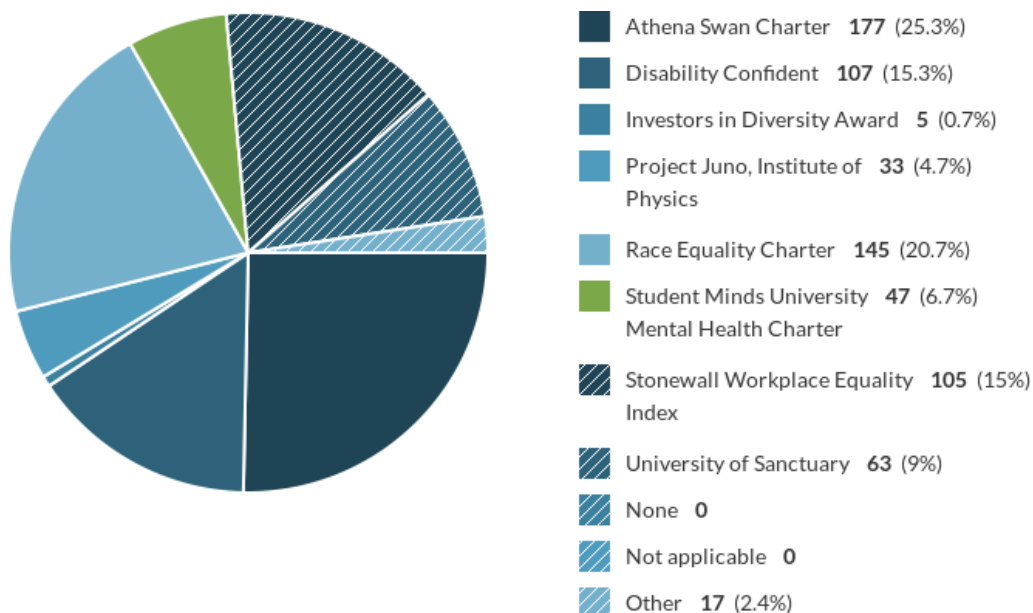
2.2 Current EDI accreditations

Quantitative findings

Amongst the survey participants, the most engaged with EDI accreditation or scheme is the Athena Swan Charter (25.3%) followed by the REC (20.7%), Disability Confident (15.3%) and the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index (15%).

Other responses within the 'other' category, all below 1% of respondents, included the Emily Test, Business in the Community and HR Excellence in Research. None of the respondents shared that they did not engage with any EDI accreditation charters or schemes. A point to note is that some answers are likely to be repeats, given that there were up to eight participants in some institutions who responded to the survey.

Figure 1: EDI accreditations or schemes currently engaged with by survey participants



Qualitative findings

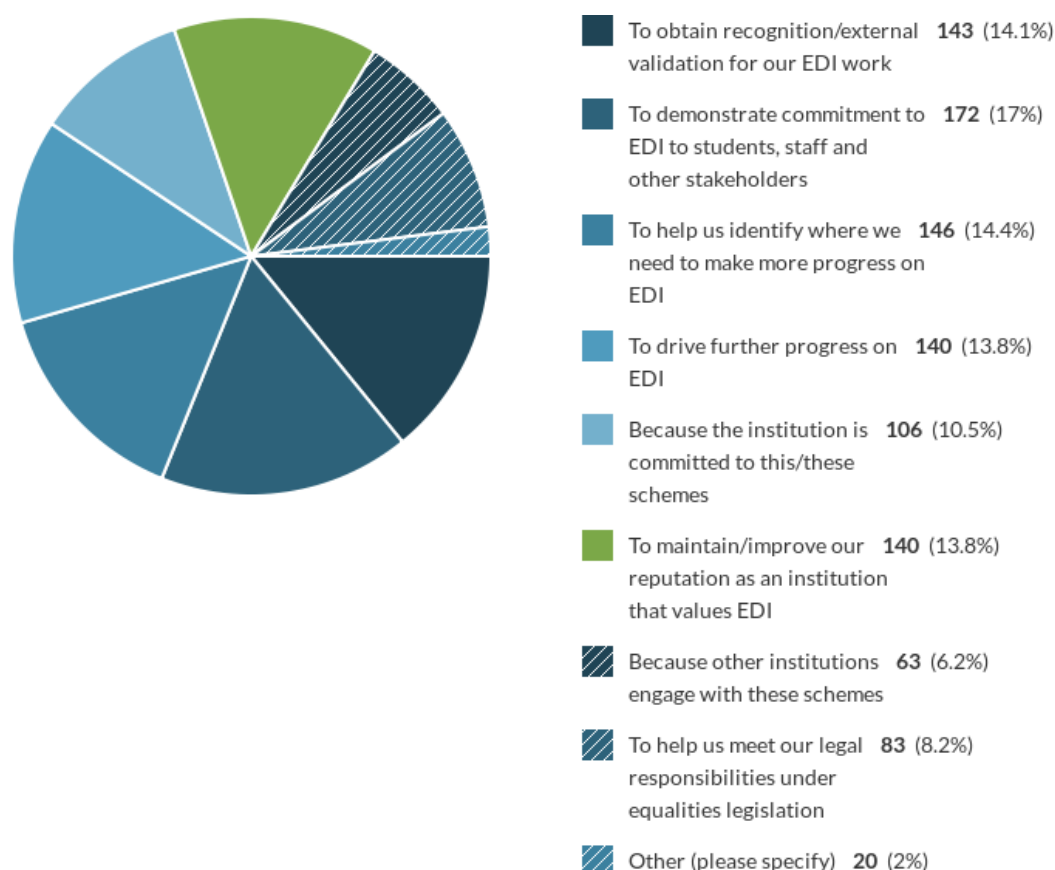
Consistent with the survey findings, Athena Swan is the most subscribed to EDI accreditation or scheme among participants in the interviews and consultation events. Other accreditations or schemes that were mentioned include the REC, Stonewall, Disability Confident, Inclusive Employers and the Social Mobility Index. International partners in Australia mentioned the Science in Australia Gender Equality Programme, the Australian Workplace Equity Index, the Mosaic Network and the Reconciliation Action Plan. The international partner in the United States specifically mentioned STEMM Equity Achievement (SEA) Change.

2.3 Reasons for current engagement with EDI accreditation(s)

Quantitative findings

The most prominent reason for current engagement with EDI accreditation(s) or schemes was 'to demonstrate commitment to EDI to students, staff and stakeholders' (17%; Figure 2). Other reasons included: "to help us identify where we need to make more progress on EDI" (14.4%), "to drive further progress on EDI" (13.8%), and "to maintain/improve our reputation as an institution that values EDI" (13.8%). Twenty respondents (2%) selected the 'other' answer option which will be qualified in the discussion of the open-text answers.

Figure 2: Reasons for current engagement



Qualitative findings

Open-text survey answers in relation to the reasons for the institution's current engagement relate to the encouragement of student-staff collaborations in recognising and respecting diversity better, providing evidence for funding applications, perceived performative display rather than active change, and virtue-signaling.

To provide opportunity for staff to collaborate with students to understand EDI issues more and learn how to recognise and respect diversity better at our University.

[Male, white, Academic - Principal / Senior Lecturer / Associate Professor]

To evidence culture change and EDI impact for grants and funding applications.

[Female, white, Professional Services – EDI]

Mainly performative, window-dressing purposes.

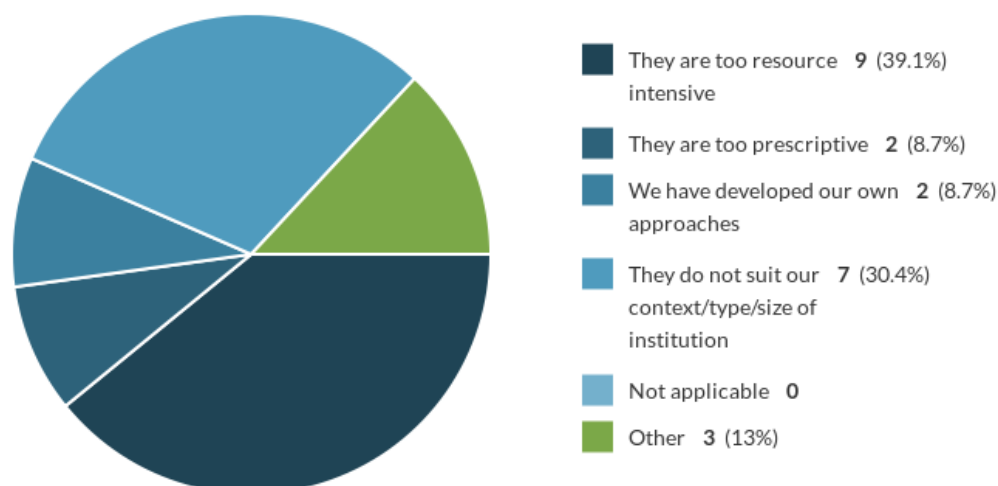
[Female, white, Academic - Lecturer / Assistant Professor]

2.4 Reasons for lack of engagement with EDI accreditations

Quantitative findings

While many institutions were actively engaged with EDI accreditations, a handful of institutions were less engaged (Figure 3). The two key reasons provided by respondents who perceived a lack of engagement within their institutions are that EDI accreditations and schemes are too resource intensive (39.1%) and they do not suit the institution's context, type or size (30.4%).

Figure 3: Reasons for current lack of engagement



Qualitative findings

Reasons found in the open-text survey responses for a lack of engagement with EDI accreditations were that a few institutions were still devising a strategic EDI plan, were unsure of which accreditation to apply for first and were deterred by the costly process. Small and specialist institutions in the consultation event spoke of the expensive

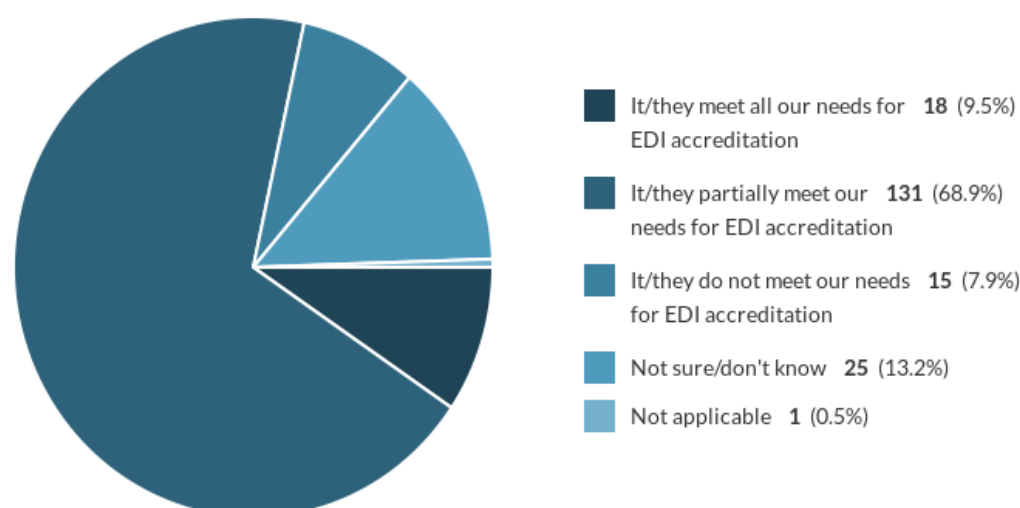
applications, the absence or lack of trained staff to take on the heavy data work, and the lack of applicability of EDI accreditations to their institutional contexts (e.g. technical language used is not accessible, very small number of students and staff with protected characteristics leading to a lack of statistical significance in surveys, and the lack of recognition of their institutional strengths).

2.5 Extent that needs are met with current EDI accreditations or schemes

Quantitative findings

The majority of survey respondents (68.9%) believed that their current engagement with EDI accreditations or schemes only partially met their needs.

Figure 4: The extent that institutional EDI needs are met



Qualitative findings

2.5.2.1 Gaps and limitations in institutional EDI work

Several gaps and limitations of institutional EDI work were pointed out in the open-text survey comments, providing context to quantitative answers on the extent of unmet EDI needs within the participants' institutions. The key gaps or limitations which were mentioned in the open-text comments were:

A poorly aligned system of multiple applications

There is a perception among the survey respondents (although not exclusive to them) that the institution/organisation's approach to EDI is disjointed in the sense that there does not appear to be a single set of actions to drive EDI work. A lack of communication has led to the duplication of work across administrative tiers and a lack of knowledge among staff of best practices and the value of engaging with EDI.

Onerous amount of work with limited resources

Survey respondents commented that putting applications for accreditations together is time consuming and can impact on the time spent doing the associated EDI work. Limited resources in terms of money and adequate permanent staff especially EDI, wellbeing and data specialists is the single most cited gap in EDI work at the participants' institutions/organisations. The resulting lack of comprehensive, detailed and nuanced data presents a challenge for EDI work. There was also disagreement over the research design and content for EDI data collections (e.g. which method to be prioritised, what personal characteristics to research on, etc.).

Limited resources were also identified in the interviews and consultation events as a key limitation to institutional EDI work. VCs and DVCs spoke of how charter applications were onerous to complete due to data heavy requirements, outdated benchmarking, "clumsy questions" and the emphasis of form over action. Difficulties in putting together a team of trained experts to manage submissions added pressure on the workload of already overworked staff and led to data collection being less systematic and in-depth than desired. The submissions to the call for existing practice noted the challenge of staff having dedicated time and space for reflection and dialogue.

Limited consideration of intersectionality

Despite the heavy workload involved in gaining some form of EDI accreditation, participants across the datasets thought that their institution/organisation's current accreditation(s) were limited in terms of addressing intersectionality.

A lack of coverage of other characteristics and competing needs

The survey participants felt that institutions/organisations have over committed to one or two strands of equality, namely gender and/or race, and as a result, have failed to meet the needs of other marginalised groups especially disabled people (including those with neurodiversity and hidden disabilities). While some institutions/organisations subscribed to Disability Confident, the scheme is regarded as too light touch for any real change to happen. Other significant gaps in EDI work are attention to LGBTQ+ individuals and consideration of class, religion, belief and age/ism (including young people and women with menopause). Apart from a lack of attention to LGBTQ+ individuals, VCs and DVCs from the interview sample identified disability to be the other key gap in the EDI work at their institutions. Senior EDI leads in the consultation event mentioned a lack of consideration of bullying, harassment and misconduct which while usually linked to protected characteristics, can affect any individual. One submission to the call for existing practice mentioned the difficulty of balancing the various and at times competing needs and demands of faculty members (academics, professional services and students).

Performative culture

Some participants across the datasets were critical of their institution/organisation's performative culture where EDI accreditation is seen as "tick box" and "badge collecting" exercise to enhance institutional reputation and protect research income. Much remains to be desired in terms of turning accreditations and institutional/organisational aspirations for EDI into action.

They provide a very useful framework for action, although they are incredibly time-consuming and take a big amount of resource. They also now seem disjointed from each other rather than being one set of actions to drive diversity and inclusion widely.

[Female, white, Professional Services – EDI]

They provide useful frameworks and help visibility. They limit intersectionality and data demands are very time consuming when staff and student data is held differently.

[Female, white, Professional Services – EDI]

All accreditations necessarily focus on partial disparities, even with the inclusion of intersectionality, certain disadvantaged individuals (and groups) are still invisible and even more so because of the focus placed on the "key" groups.

[Female, white, Academic - Principal / Senior Lecturer / Associate Professor]

It's very easy to get sucked into the accreditation process and value that more highly than the actual outcomes of the diversity initiatives. I think we are ending up with a lot of notional commitment to diversity and not enough action on diversity.

[Female, white, Academic - Professor / Chair]

I think having an additional accreditation to kind of work towards might just end up being an additional thing to look like we're doing stuff on....badge collecting addition to the badge collections that are already out there.

[Access, Participation and Outcome staff, Consultation event]

2.6 EDI work meeting institutional needs

The open-text findings also show reasons why some survey participants thought the current EDI accreditations or schemes partially or fully meet the needs of their institutions. The prominent reasons were that the accreditations or schemes provide a useful framework for analysis, assessments and action, and they help to maintain a focus on EDI issues.

Quantitative findings

When asked about existing EDI practice and the implementation of a holistic or joined-up approach to EDI, 5.8% of survey respondents suggested that their institution/organisation did not already work in a holistic way or that they were not sure. The most prominent way that institutions/organisations acknowledged their own holistic approach to EDI was through working in partnership in developing EDI activity, bringing groups, interests and perspectives together across different areas of equality; 14.8% answered this. Other notable responses were: 'Alignment with Public Sector Duties' (11.3%), and 'Whole Institution approaches beyond Advance HE's charters' (11.1%).

Only 1.1% responded to say that their institutions do not take any holistic approach currently, which is lower than the 6.2% that stated that their institutions do not engage with any EDI accreditations or schemes. This would then suggest that respondents feel that their institutions engage with holistic approaches to EDI work without engaging in specific EDI charters or accreditations.

Table 2: Existing holistic EDI practices in the participants' institutions

Holistic Equality, Diversity and Inclusion practices	Number	Percentage
Working in partnership in developing EDI activity, bringing groups, interests and perspectives together across different areas of equality	136	14.8%
Use of equality analysis/impact assessment to embed EDI considerations across strategy, policy and practice	106	11.5%
Alignment with Public Sector Equality Duty/ equalities legislation requirements, such as equality objectives or outcomes	104	11.3%
Whole institution approaches beyond Advance HE's charters in gender and race equality, such as disability or LGBT+ inclusion	102	11.1%
Integrating consideration of areas beyond protected characteristics, such as socio-economic status or poverty, or health and wellbeing, alongside EDI	98	10.7%
Use of data and evidence across and beyond the protected characteristics to identify institutional priorities	85	9.3%
Integrated structures and/or systems for EDI and / or accreditations	83	9.0%
Holistic, integrated or intersectional EDI action planning at an organisational level	83	9.0%
Alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals	60	6.5%
Not sure / I don't know / None / Not applicable / Other	61	6.7%

Note: Respondents were allowed to select more than one answer option. Within the 0.9% who ticked 'other', it seemed that one recurring theme was uncertainty over the extent to which they were able to select the other options. There was concern that whilst technically they could answer 'yes' to many options, they did not think it goes far enough, or perhaps they only partially apply to the institutions in question.

Qualitative findings

Other holistic EDI practices which were not listed as an answer option in the survey but were brought up by the survey participants are:

- Having an EDI manager to lead EDI work across the institution, raising awareness and taking forward projects with EDI priorities
- Regular meetings between human resources/EDI staff and the volunteer chairs of EDI staff networks
- Parity of esteem in work for technicians and carers
- Central funding and support for intern administration of volunteer EDI staff networks

Holistic EDI practices that were shared in the consultation events and submissions to the call for existing practice include:

- Curriculum mapping and review to decolonise the curriculum and embed EDI principles
- Appointment of Inclusivity Representatives

- Reflexive workshops informed by sector and institutional data, research and lived experiences centred on intersectionality
- Give a holistic approach to EDI a high profile in institutional communications

Several survey participants pointed out that although heading in the right direction, the holistic EDI practices are far from being fully effective due to a lack of translation to tangible joined-up actions and the omission of certain groups from consultations.

But again, age and faith do not have a network to consult with.

[Female, white, Professional Services - Business Development and Innovation]

I could easily (and legitimately) say yes to all of these, but that implies that we're getting it right. We're not. Too much remains siloed. On the surface we're making all the right sounds but we're not seeing a follow through into joined up action despite genuinely held intentions.

[Female, white, Senior Management]

2.7 Effectiveness of current EDI practices in the implementation of a holistic approach

Quantitative findings

In terms of the effectiveness of current EDI practices in the implementation of a holistic or joined up approach, a majority of survey respondents indicated that the practices were either very effective or effective. More than one fifth of answers in relation to the effectiveness of each listed current EDI practice in the survey is 'neither agree nor disagree'. The finding suggests that while holistic practices are present to some degree in many institutions, they lack integration for real effective action to happen at the institutional level.

It has to be pointed out that the percentage of neutral answers is very high for 'other' practices not listed in the survey (53.6%). This will be contextualised with the open-text responses.

Qualitative findings

Survey participants who found existing EDI practices very effective or effective for the implementation of a holistic or joined up approach justified their answers with the following reasons:

- Useful stakeholder discussions about data presentation leading to better analysis and understanding of different staff and student expectations, perceptions and lived experiences
- Improved governance assurance and visibility of EDI work
- Institutional effort in allowing freedom of speech on campus
- Regular meetings between human resources/ EDI staff and the volunteer chairs of the staff EDI networks
- Alignment to the government's national policy

In contrast, comments for close-ended responses marked under the 'other' category show uncertainty over the effectiveness of holistic EDI practices at the respondents' institutions. While there were the recurring comments about these practices being at an infancy stage and that they tend to be a tick box exercise lacking action and a sustained joined up approach, there were a few strong views that institutions should not engage in any more EDI

accreditations. One recurring view was that nothing will fundamentally change due to resistance from dominant groups who benefit from the status quo of current institutional structures. Another view is that there has to be a limit as to how much diversity should be represented in EDI work to maximise resources. These views serve as a reminder that there are challenges and risks to implementing a holistic or joined up approach to EDI.

Although the institution tracks the data regarding EDI matters, and have published on the website their commitment to enhancing EDI, in reality, they don't act on these principles at all. I don't think any sort of accreditation would help, people are scared of taking appropriate measures (especially middle-aged white men don't really care about these things!)

[Female, white, Academic - Principal / Senior Lecturer / Associate Professor]

This whole subject needs an overhaul. When you break society down every single one of us fits into a 'diversity' box of some kind. It needs to STOP as it's getting out of hand. Way too much money being wasted.

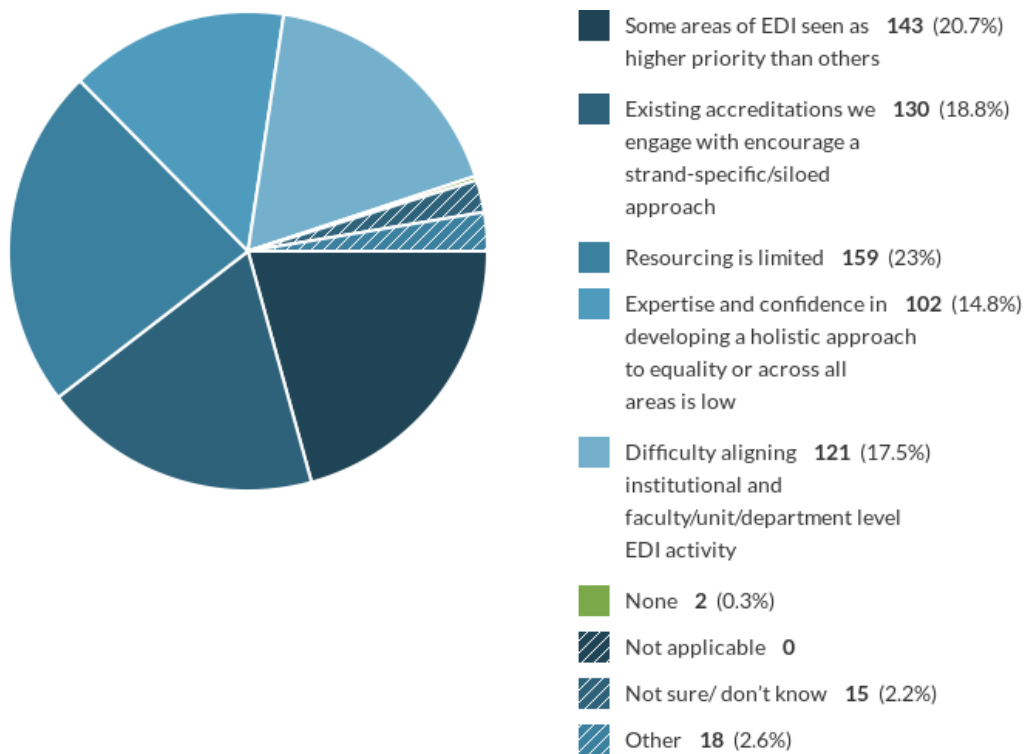
[Female, Ethnicity not disclosed, Professional Services]

2.8 Challenges and risks faced by institutions in taking a holistic or joined up approach

Quantitative findings

As Figure 5 shows, the most selected challenge for taking a holistic or joined up approach was in relation to limited resources (23%), followed by the giving of higher priority to some areas of EDI than others (20.7%). The concern about resources is not just about the availability of new resources to support holistic work but also the pressure placed on existing resources such as staff capacity (as suggested by earlier open-text comments). It is therefore not surprising that "Increased workload in the short-term if institutions choose to do Athena Swan, REC and use a new form of EDI accreditation" is the most prominent perceived risk in the implementation of a new holistic EDI accreditation (Table 3).

Figure 5: Challenges faced by institutions



Apart from increased workload, the perceived risk of duplication in terms of schemes and awards that focus on EDI as well as in terms of regulatory or funding requirements (combined percentage of 28%), suggests that institutions are wary that a new holistic accreditation would replace the good work done in other accreditations, schemes and plans.

Table 3: Risks of adopting a new holistic accreditation

Holistic Equality, Diversity and Inclusion practices	Number	Percentage
Increased workload in the short-term if institutions choose to do Athena Swan, REC and use a new form of EDI accreditation	151	22.4%
Dilution of focus and impact on protected characteristic/strand specific priorities such as race or gender equality	117	17.4%
Duplicating other schemes and awards that focus on aspects of EDI	106	15.8%
Less rigour, e.g. institutions choosing to focus on areas that are 'easier' or they are already performing well on	105	15.6%
Duplicating other regulatory or funding requirements relating to EDI (e.g. Access and participation plans/ Outcome agreements/ Fee and Access Plans, Equality Objectives/ Outcomes)	82	12.2%
Loss of reputational and institutional capital built through Athena Swan and REC charters (if institutions choose to move away from them)	70	10.4%
Not sure/ don't know/ Other	42	6.2%

Qualitative findings

A number of challenges emerged from the qualitative data.

Limited resources

As evident in the quantitative data and open-text comments elsewhere, limited resources was perceived as a key risk of developing a new option/approach for EDI accreditation/recognition. Participants across the datasets pointed out that the burden of EDI work tends to fall on women, those from minoritised ethnic and other marginalised groups, many of whom do not have EDI formally accounted for in their workload. Not only were there concerns of disproportionate and unrecognised labour in EDI work, but also concerns that 'selling' a new accreditation to senior management (VCs and DVCs) at respective institutions could be very hard due to assumptions of additional resources required. EDI practitioners in the consultation event mentioned the likeliness of having to write lengthy documents to justify the need for a new charter at their institutions. Small and specialist institutions in the consultation event believed that they were the hardest hit by limited resources if a new charter were to be signed up to as they would be largely reliant on a few volunteers (whom they recognised as motivated but overworked) for data work.

As discussed earlier, pressure on staff workload was identified by the VCs and DVCs we interviewed as a significant limitation in their institutional EDI work. There was concern of being compelled to sign up to a proliferation of charters which comes with the risk of the institution not having capacity to fully commit to action. They were also wary that a new holistic accreditation would involve increased data collection work that is too wide a coverage that it skims past particular issues that need focusing on (this theme also came up in consultation sessions and relates to the following point on dilution).

Dilution

Consistent with the quantitative survey data, another key risk that came up not only in the open-ended survey responses but also elsewhere in the interviews and consultation sessions is the dilution of meaning of existing work being done, both directly linked to charters and otherwise. While the VCs and DVCs we interviewed shared this concern about dilution, they went further to emphasise that current accreditation charters such as Athena Swan and the REC are already intersectional and need not be replaced or supplemented by a new holistic charter. The understanding seems to be that intersectional is synonymous with holistic.

Reputational risk

EDI practitioners in the consultation event mentioned that there could also be reputational risk as exposing failing areas in EDI may impact on the attractiveness of the institution as a place for study and work. This could result in institutions hiding up issues such as gaps in student and staff recruitment to protect reputational image.

Funding

There is uncertainty among the survey participants over the impact that a new approach could have on existing charters in relation to funding. Participants who raised the issues of getting external funding after hypothetically having to choose between Athena Swan and a new holistic charter acknowledged that, whilst potentially problematic, senior management might be concerned about engaging with a new charter due to the fact that external funders may view the validity of a holistically designed charter to be less. This concern was not picked up in the interviews with senior management.

I think alternative schemes would increase workload in the long term...Further, this workload is likely to fall on women, not in senior positions and be counterproductive to stated aims. And rather pointless, due to lack of any significant impact of any Advance HE charter award, to date.

[Gender and ethnicity not disclosed, Academic - Principal / Senior Lecturer / Associate Professor]

There is a risk that institutions fail to recognise where there are fault lines if there is significant dilution of focus and start to focus on the wrong things (things that are easier, or more visible etc.), or not to engage at all if it is too complex a process.

[Female, white, Professional Services - Human Resources]

If it is up to each institution to pick what they focus on bench marking is not possible? Are there also impacts here re[garding] funders?

[Female, white, Professional Services – EDI]

I don't think that our approaches are anything other than holistic and intersectional because we're an institution, not a rule book. So if people don't conform to particular characteristics solely, they lead complex, multiply inflected lives...the Athena Swan and the Race Equality Charter and our current marks and so forth are useful ways...of benchmarking progress, but do not define how you set up your diversity and inclusion policies...I've always seen our approach to equality is kind of founded on, you know, fairness essentially as a value and you know, you'll bring in everything else as you need to.

[VC, Interview]

I believe there might be a reputational risk for the institutions themselves through acknowledging maybe their failings and then, like the impacts of that. If your institution says, well, we're racist or we're transphobic, or whatever, you know, what's going to be the impact of that, you know, in terms of future diversity and attracting students and staff?

[EDI Practitioner, Consultation event]

2.9 Views on further scoping of a new form of EDI accreditation

Quantitative findings

Despite expressions of concern over challenges and risks, the majority of survey participants (73.2%) were in support of Advance HE moving forward with the scoping of a new form of EDI accreditation. However, nine respondents (4%) answered 'no' while 51 respondents (22.8%) chose 'not sure/ don't know'.

Qualitative findings

Answers elaborated upon in the open-text fields in the survey and in the consultation events reflect a strong urge from the participants for Advance HE to consider flexibility and the applicability of a new holistic approach to their institutional contexts. The opinion among participants from small and specialist institutions is that a new holistic approach should be attentive to the specific strengths (e.g. widening participation for lower socio-economic groups) and limitations (e.g. constraints in gathering large scale quantitative data) of their institutions. They welcomed a holistic approach which could encourage cross-sector partnerships, external audits and combined institutional data resources. Senior EDI leads in the consultation event believed that the risk of having a new holistic approach lies in the imposition of a single metrics-heavy framework that does not reflect different institutional ambitions, individual journeys of progress and lived experiences of EDI. While supportive of a new holistic charter, they stressed that the charter should allow them to reflect inwardly, using their own institutional mission informed by local context as the "starting point" for EDI accreditation work.

It's important there is an accreditation specific to HE for smaller institutions. The current ones are unobtainable for us for many reasons already cited and this has a detrimental impact on our institution. It is a fact brought up the SU - why are we not part of REC etc. When they may not understand the complexities involved for application for a small institution.

[Female, white, Professional Services – EDI]

I think there also needs to be some flexibility in terms of, every university is different, they've all got different demographics, depending on very different variables, including the area where they sit, but also within that they might have other priorities. So some universities might have to do more on one characteristic than others. So I think there needs to be some parameters within that.

[Senior EDI lead, Consultation event]

Smaller institutions are penalised, and yet our staff work so hard to get our students through and support them and all the activities that take place within and outside of the curricula really do need to be recognised...we won't be recognised quantitative[ly] with the current charter and

there's no drive there because we're not research based, so it's really, really important to showcase, I would say, work but also come together as small institutions as an enabler for what's important in terms of our values for a holistic view point of EDI.

[Small and specialist institution consultation event, PAR11]

Other key concerns across the datasets, which have already been discussed earlier, are in relation to dilution, duplication and performative EDI practices (including references to 'badge-collecting' and 'cherry picking').

2.10 Learnings from international partners

While some UK-based participants seem undecided whether a new holistic approach is the way forward, Advance HE's international partners in Australia and the United States are more supportive of the approach. The international partners took pride in the holistic approach that institutions in their countries are already taking, which in their contexts, refers to having intersectionality as a core and obligatory component in their EDI work. There is the belief that duplication of work, a theme brought up repeatedly by UK-based participants, is not a significant issue as a holistic approach actually minimises duplication that comes from having separate charters.

I don't think however that the intersectional approach that we're taking makes it any more or less work because in general you're looking at the same thing, you're just looking at it from a different lens.

[US partner, Interview]

The international partners' views of the advantages of a holistic approach are that it: addresses systemic issues; gives flexibility to address different factors or characteristics, and gives a fuller picture of EDI.

However, a key challenge faced by the international partners lies in data and reporting. The Australian partner explained that institutions have yet to reach a stage of maturity where people could feel safe and empowered in the sharing of personal information. There is a lack of robust data for characteristics beyond gender in addition to a lack of formal reporting and deliverables. The US partner believed that there is a risk that those from minoritised ethnic groups could feel ignored when they are aggregated although this is sometimes necessary due to their small numbers and their personally identifiable data. Both partners in Australia and the United States talked about the burden of reporting especially when resources are limited in terms of funding and expertise.

Other challenges and risks experienced by the international partners included: dilution, EDI becoming a catch-all term, and resistance from dominant groups.

In terms of good practices for a holistic approach, the international partners have suggested the following:

- A targeted approach
- Use SMART objectives
- Getting the right expertise to do the job
- Honesty and transparency, reflecting on lessons learned
- Broad and meaningful consultation with all stakeholders
- Transparency, quality and centralisation of data
- Engagement with male and culturally diverse allies

- Flexible and non-prescriptive approach
- Embrace intersectionality
- Focus on qualitative data which gives in-depth details and nuances
- Consider the experiences of those who hold privilege
- Use external evaluators
- Cooperation among regional universities

3 Discussion

3.1 Summary

This independent consultation exercise set out to explore the potential for a new holistic approach to EDI accreditation. The work has been guided by a representative sector Advisory Group. We specifically sought to: collate and understand stakeholder views on the potential benefits, opportunities and risks of developing a holistic approach to institutional EDI accreditation to sit alongside Athena Swan and the REC; gather existing practice and lessons learned from members' efforts to take a holistic and strategic approach to EDI activity, including the work of international members, with the goal of producing a robust evidence base to present to the Advisory Group to support them making a recommendation to Advance HE on next steps in developing its EDI activity to support the sector to be effective, efficient and impactful.

Using four different approaches to consultation, we found that the consensus seems to be general agreement that a new approach to EDI accreditation is needed, and the majority of those who stated that there is a need also expressed support for Advance HE progressing with the scoping of a new form of EDI accreditation. However, it should also be noted that despite acknowledgement that more is needed, there is hesitancy and uncertainty in the sector.

3.2 Strengths and limitations

This research has utilised data provided by a rich and diverse sample of 279 stakeholder participants to capture their views on the potential benefits, opportunities, risks and lessons of developing a holistic approach to institutional EDI accreditation.

The consultation was necessarily carried out over summer (July and August) and this may have resulted in fewer respondents than if conducted at another time of year. It is likely that our respondents were particularly motivated to participate and we may not have heard all views or voices. The survey questions were developed by the team based on their expertise and knowledge of the area. There was a tight deadline for the delivery of the work which meant that we were unable to keep the survey open for longer than three weeks. However, the different quantitative and qualitative methods employed in the forms of a survey, interviews, consultation events and submissions to a call for existing practice have resulted in data that are comprehensive as well as in-depth.

Another key strength was having an Advisory Group consisting of members from a range of institution types with expert knowledge of EDI, helping to guide the work.

3.3 Main considerations for the Advisory Group

Based on this consultation with the sector, we outline the following considerations for the Advisory Group:

Definition of 'holistic'

The definition of the term 'holistic' is something that needs clarifying in promoting any kind of guidance surrounding a new holistic approach to EDI work/accreditation. This is particularly relevant to consider, as there was frequent concern across the consultation approaches of the potential for the dilution of meaning of existing institutional engagement with EDI work and the impact this could have. Perhaps this would be less of a concern if the meaning of the term 'holistic' was clarified. Respondents were also clear that rigour needed to be considered so that institutions didn't focus on areas of EDI that were 'easy' for them.

Other inequalities beyond 'protected characteristics'

Throughout the research, holistic was taken to also mean 'intersectional' by the participants. The key desire for a more intersectional approach was evident as the majority of participants did not consider that the current EDI engagement by their institution/organisation fulfilled all of their needs. Data from the survey and consultation events showed the lack of consideration of not only other groups with protected characteristics such as those with a disability, but also moving beyond the protected characteristics into considerations of class status. This is perhaps something that maybe of interest to Advance HE, as the support is there from the sector for Advance HE to take the lead in moving beyond solely protected characteristics will make EDI work more inclusive.

Resources

A significant concern that was raised across the different consultation approaches was around resources. For smaller and more specialist institutions, there were concerns over the pre-existing lack of resources, and worry over where to find the additional resources required to engage in even further EDI accreditation work. For larger, more established institutions, there were concerns over *selling* the value of a new/additional accreditation to senior management who were the ones responsible for the allocation of resources. Evidently, whilst there is desire to engage in a holistic EDI accreditation/scheme, the resource-intensity needs to be considered in designing holistic EDI accreditations. Developing a new accreditation would have to give careful consideration to resource implications.

Duplication

There was a perceived risk of duplication in terms of schemes and awards that focus on EDI as well as in terms of regulatory or funding requirements, suggesting that respondents were wary that a new holistic accreditation would replace the good work done in other accreditations. International partners viewed a holistic approach as minimising duplication but it should be noted that their understanding of holistic (across institutions), may not be the same as what others consider it to mean (across protected characteristics).

Despite acknowledgement that more work is needed if a holistic approach to EDI is to be adopted, there is hesitancy and uncertainty within the sector. However, almost three

quarters of respondents to the survey supported Advance HE in moving forward with further scoping of a new approach to EDI accreditation.

4 References

1. Review of the Athena SWAN Charter: Report and Appendices | Advance HE (advance-he.ac.uk)
2. Race Equality Charter Review Phase 2 | Advance HE (advance-he.ac.uk)
3. Advance HE Strategy 2021-24 | Advance HE (advance-he.ac.uk)

5 Appendices

5.1 Interview topic guides

5.1.1 Topic guide for interviews with VCs and DVCs

Opening topics

- Introduce myself and involvement in this project
- Reminder about confidentiality and that the interview will be recorded
- Reminder that they don't have to answer all questions and can stop interview at any time
- Thank again for agreeing to take part

Views on a holistic approach to EDI accreditation/recognition

Aim: To understand views on the potential benefits, opportunities and risks of Advance HE developing a holistic EDI accreditation / recognition

- Ask about what engagement they have with EDI within their role
- Institution's engagement with any EDI accreditation scheme/charter – what is their experience with these?
- What gaps, if any, do you think there are in your institution's EDI work and activities?
- Would institution be interested in a new option for institutional EDI accreditation/recognition? If yes, why? If no, why?

* Explain that consultation is at an early stage. No decisions have been made about whether a holistic accreditation/recognition will go ahead. Participant's views matter.

- What are the key potential benefits of developing a new option for EDI accreditation/recognition?

Prompts

A more holistic, joined-up approach

Flexibility to identify EDI priorities that matter most to institution

More rigour and recognition of other aspects of EDI beyond gender and race

Institution able to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty more holistically

A more efficient and streamlined accreditation process

Opportunity to extend EDI accreditation to small and specialist institutions

- What do you think are the key potential risks?

Prompts

Loss of focus and impact on race and gender equality equality

Loss of effort and reputation if institution moves away from Athena Swan and REC charters

Duplication (EDI schemes and awards, regulatory/funding requirements relating to EDI – access and participation, outcome agreements, fee and access plans, equality objectives, etc.)

Increased workload

Less rigour if institutions choose to focus on 'easier' areas

Aim: To gather existing practice and lessons learned from efforts to use a holistic approach

- Has your institution made any attempts to develop a holistic/joined-up/strategic approach to EDI?
 - If yes, what has this involved? If no, why not?
- What do you think are the main challenges and barriers to developing a holistic approach?
- What do you think are the main benefits to developing a holistic approach?

Prompts

Some areas of EDI seen as higher priority than others

Existing charters/accreditation encourage a strand-specific/siloed approach

Limited resources

Difficulty aligning institutional and faculty/unit/department level EDI activity

Aim: To explore how Advance HE should invest in and develop its EDI activities

- In what ways, do you think EDI work and activities could be more effective, efficient and impactful?
- How could EDI accreditation be more efficient and impactful?
- What do you think should be the strategic direction of EDI within the higher education sector?
- Would you support Advance HE moving forward with further scoping of some form of new EDI accreditation? Why/why not?

Any other comments

End: Thank participant, remind of confidentiality

5.1.2 Topic guide for interviews with international partners

Opening topics

Aims:

- 1) Remind participant about confidentiality and that the interview will be recorded
- 2) Introduce project
- 3) Encourage participant to open up and share their views and experiences

- Reminder about confidentiality and the recording of the interview
- Emphasise that research is at an early consultation stage
- Participant's job role
- Participant's engagement with EDI on a day-to-day basis in the role

Views on a holistic approach to EDI accreditation/recognition

Aim: To understand the history and development of partner institution's holistic approach to EDI accreditation/recognition

- History of institution's engagement with a holistic approach to EDI

Prompt

Previous/present EDI accreditation/recognition schemes, if any

- What gaps are there in the institution's current EDI work?
- To what extent is participant's institution using/moving towards a holistic approach to EDI accreditation/recognition? What does it look like?

Prompts

Cover all areas of EDI / protected characteristics

Focused on specific areas of EDI / protected characteristics (evidence-based and institution-specific)

Fill in gaps in existing charters and schemes

Act as a guidance, rather than a prescription

Focus on outcomes rather than actions and the application

Outcomes based on size of institution and scale of problem(s) identified

Outcomes to be determined by sector representatives

Be able to be used at multiple levels (institution, department, unit, faculty)

Requirement to deliver within a specified time

Sustainable with measurable improvements and progress over time

Aim: To gather lessons learned from any efforts to use a holistic approach

- What have been the key benefits of developing a holistic approach to EDI accreditation/recognition (if any)?

Prompts

A more holistic, joined-up approach

Flexibility to identify EDI priorities that matter most to institution

Rigour and recognition of neglected aspects of EDI

Institution able to meet the equivalent of the Public Sector Equality Duty more holistically

A more efficient and streamlined accreditation process

- What have been the key disadvantages and limitations (if any)?

Prompts

Loss of focus and impact on race and gender equality

Increased workload

Less rigour if institutions choose to focus on 'easier' areas

- What have been the challenges and barriers in adopting a holistic approach?

Prompts

Some areas of EDI seen as higher priority than others

Limited resources

Difficulty aligning institutional and faculty/unit/department level EDI activity

Aim: To explore how Advance HE should invest in and develop its EDI activities

- How can EDI work and activities be more effective, efficient and impactful?

Any other comments

5.1.3 EDI Practitioners' Consultation Event Outline

Time	Item
12:30	<p>Welcome, introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Session outline and ground rules • Newcastle University team intros • Background and context • Sarah DH do one slide on AHE background
12:45	<p>Getting to know you: Polls</p> <p>Practice poll: What is your favourite type of cake?</p> <p>Set of 3 polls (ask people to scroll down to see all)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What EDI accreditations does your institution currently engage with (if any)? Multiple choice • Do you work on any EDI accreditations as part of your role? Yes/No/Not applicable • What areas of EDI do you work on? Multiple choice
12:55	<p>Breakout session 1 (3 groups)</p> <p>Introductions and interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What sparked your interest in this session? (ask to introduce themselves at same time) <p>'Blue sky thinking' / imagining a new form of EDI accreditation</p> <p>If consultation suggests the sector is in support and Advance HE providing some form of new option for EDI accreditation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you like to see in a new EDI accreditation? What would be the key principles or ingredients? • What would you <u>not</u> like to see in any new EDI accreditation?
13:20	Comfort break – check for questions in chat.
13:30	Feedback to group & answer any questions in chat
13:40	<p>Breakout session 2 (3 groups) Opportunities and risks</p> <p>If consultation suggests the sector is in support and Advance HE providing some form of new option for EDI accreditation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think could be the possibilities / opportunities of Advance HE developing a new form of EDI accreditation? • What do you think could be the potential risks / drawbacks of Advance HE developing a new form of EDI accreditation?
14:00	Feedback to group & answer any questions in the chat
14:10	<p>Final thoughts:</p> <p>Poll: From what you've heard so far, would you support Advance HE progressing with further scoping of some new form of EDI accreditation, using the findings of the consultation?</p> <p>Final comments – any thoughts/suggestions you've not had the chance to say?</p>
14:20	Close – remind of next steps, survey, call for practice

5.1.4 Senior EDI Leads' Consultation Event Outline

Time	Item
15:30	Welcome, introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Session outline and ground rules • Background • Aims of the session
15:45	Introductions & interest: <i>Ask all to introduce themselves and say in one sentence what sparked their interest in coming to this session.</i>
16:00	Topic 1: If Advance HE provided some form of new option for EDI accreditation, what do you think could be the possible: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities and benefits • Risks and drawbacks
16:20	Topic 2: Imagining a new form of EDI accreditation - 'Blue sky thinking' If the consultation suggests the sector is in support of Advance HE providing some form of new EDI accreditation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you like to see in a new EDI accreditation? (What would be the <u>key principles</u> or ingredients?) • What would you <u>not</u> like to see in any new EDI accreditation?
16:40	Topic 3: From what you've heard so far, are you interested in the potential for some new form/option of institutional EDI accreditation?
16:50	Close – other elements of the research and next steps

Prompts for question areas

1. What do you think are the **potential benefits** of Advance HE developing a new option for EDI accreditation that encompasses student access, participation and outcomes (if any)?
 - Encouraging institutions to take a more holistic, joined-up approach to EDI
 - Increased flexibility to focus on institutional and local evidence.
 - Increased rigour and recognition in addressing priorities beyond gender and race, such as disability, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status.
 - The opportunity to extend EDI accreditation to a wider group of institutions working in HE, such as small and specialist institutions and colleges.
 - Creating diverse pipelines from UG study through to university careers.
 - Other (please specify)
2. What do you think are the **potential risks** of Advance HE developing a new option for EDI accreditation that encompasses student access, participation and outcomes (if any)?
 - Duplicating other existing sector requirements – e.g. APPs, outcomes agreements, Fee and Access Plans.

- Duplicating other schemes and awards that focus on aspects of EDI.
- Increased workload if institutions choose to do Athena Swan, REC and use a new form of EDI accreditation.
- Loss of focus and impact on strand specific priorities such as race or gender equality.
- Loss of reputational and institutional capital built through Athena Swan and REC charters (if institutions choose to move away from them).

5.1.5 Small & Specialist Institutions' Consultation Event Outline

Time	Item
9:30	Welcome, introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Session outline and ground rules (session recording) • Aims of the session • Background to the consultation
09:45	Introductions & interest: <i>Ask all to introduce themselves and say in one sentence what sparked their interest in coming to this session.</i>
09:55	Topic 1: What EDI accreditations you currently use/don't use and why <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you currently engage with any EDI accreditation/ award/ recognition schemes? Why? • What are the barriers to engaging in some existing schemes? (if any)
10:15	Topic 2: Imagining a new form of EDI accreditation - 'Blue sky thinking' If the consultation suggests the sector is in support of Advance HE providing some form of new EDI accreditation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you like to see in a new EDI accreditation? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What would be useful for your institution? ○ What would be the <u>key principles</u>/ ingredients? • What would you <u>not</u> like to see in any new EDI accreditation? What wouldn't be of use to you?
10:35	Topic 3: From what you've heard so far, are you interested in the potential for some new form/option of institutional EDI accreditation? Why?
10:55	Close – other elements of the research and next steps

5.1.6 Student Access, Participation and Outcomes' Consultation Event Outline

Time	Item
13:00	Welcome, introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Session outline and ground rules • Background • Aims of the session
13:15	Introductions & interest:

	<i>Ask all to introduce themselves and say in one sentence what sparked their interest in coming to this session.</i>
13:25	<p>Topic 1: If Advance HE provided some form of new option for EDI accreditation, what do you think could be the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities and benefits e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ recognition for EDI work in access, participation & success beyond what is in REC ○ encouraging a more joined-up approach to EDI within institutions ○ encouraging a more intersectional approach • Risks and drawbacks e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ duplicating other requirements (APPs etc) or EDI schemes ○ loss of focus on protected characteristic/strand specific EDI challenges (e.g. race and gender) ○ challenges with resourcing
13:45	<p>Topic 2: Imagining a new form of EDI accreditation - 'Blue sky thinking'</p> <p>If the consultation suggests the sector is in support of Advance HE providing some form of new EDI accreditation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you like to see in a new EDI accreditation? (What would be the key principles or ingredients?) • What would you <u>not</u> like to see in any new EDI accreditation?
14:05	<p>Topic 3:</p> <p>From what you've heard so far, are you interested in the potential for some new form/option of institutional EDI accreditation? Yes, Maybe, No, Not sure yet</p>
14:20	Close – other elements of the research and next steps

5.2 Characteristics of survey sample (n=225)

Participant Age

Age	Number
20-24	3
25-29	4
30-34	9
35-39	23
40-44	39
45-49	34
50-54	37
55-59	34
60-64	27
65 and over	6
Prefer not to say	8

Disability/Health Impairment Status

Disability Status	Number
Yes	59
No	153
Prefer not to say	9

Sex

Participant sex	Number
Female	160
Male	51
Prefer not to say	10

Gender

Participant gender identity	Number
Man	49
Woman	157
Non-binary	5
Prefer not to say	11
Other	1

Transgender

Trans/Transgender History	Number
Yes	4
No	201
Prefer not to say	10

Sexual orientation

Sexual Orientation	Number
Asexual	2
Bisexual	11
Gay or lesbian	18
Heterosexual/straight	164
Queer	7
Prefer not to say	18
Other	2

Caring Responsibilities

Caring responsibilities	Number
Yes	102
No	110
Prefer not to say	9

Belief/Religion

Religion/belief	Count
No religion (including atheist)	120
Buddhist	1
Christian	68
Jewish	4
Muslim	3
Sikh	2
Prefer not to say	14
Other	10

Other: Including Pagan, Spiritual, Roman Catholic, Culturally Jewish

Other survey responses

Reasons for current engagement in EDI charters	Number
To obtain recognition/external validation for our EDI work	143
To demonstrate commitment to EDI to students, staff and other stakeholders	172
To help us identify where we need to make more progress on EDI	146
To drive further progress on EDI	140
Because the institution is committed to this/these schemes	106
To maintain/improve our reputation as an institution that values EDI	140
Because other institutions engage with these schemes	63
To help us meet our legal responsibilities under equalities legislation	83
Other	20

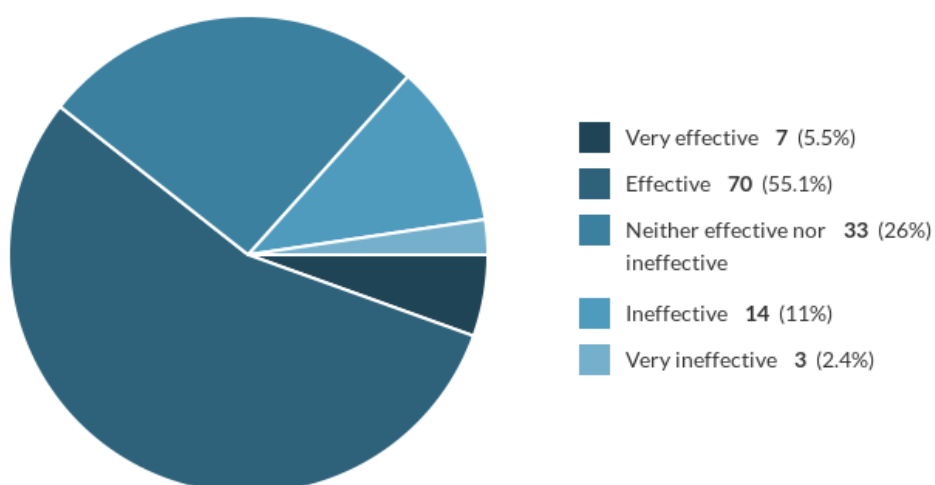
Extent to which current engaged-with charters/schemes meet needs	Number
It/they meet all our needs for EDI accreditation	18
It/they partially meet our needs for EDI accreditation	131
It/they do not meet our needs for EDI accreditation	15
Not sure/don't know	25
Not applicable	1

Reasons for not engaging with any EDI accreditations	Number
They are too resource intensive	9
They are too prescriptive	2
We have developed our own approaches	2
They do not suit our context/type/size of institution	7
Other	3

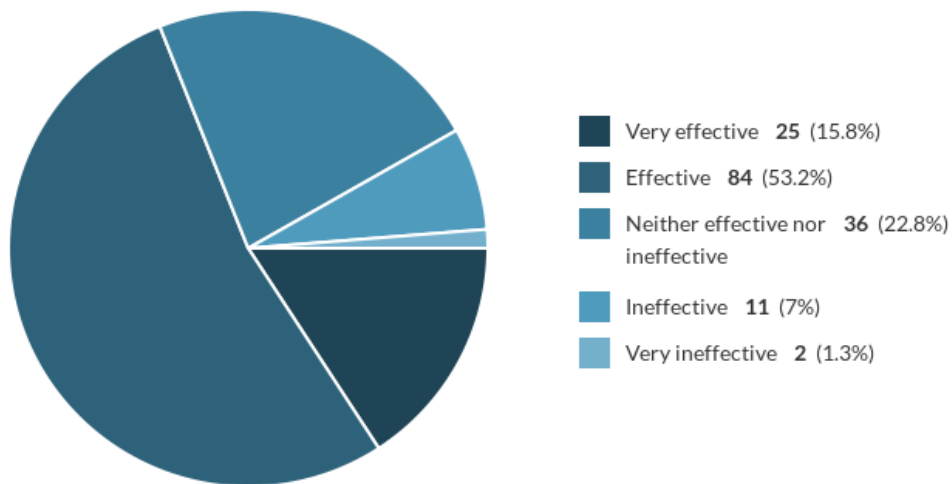
Existing EDI practices	Number
Working in partnership in developing EDI activity, bringing groups, interests and perspectives together across different areas of equality	136
Use of equality analysis/impact assessment to embed EDI considerations across strategy, policy and practice	106
Alignment with Public Sector Equality Duty/equalities legislation requirements, such as equality objectives or outcomes	104
Whole institution approaches beyond Advance HE's charters in gender and race equality, such as disability or LGBT+ inclusion	102
Integrating consideration of areas beyond protected characteristics, such as socio-economic status or poverty, or health and wellbeing, alongside EDI	98
Use of data and evidence across and beyond the protected characteristics to identify institutional priorities	85
Integrated structures and/or systems for EDI and/or accreditations	83
Holistic, integrated or intersectional EDI action planning at an organisational level	83
Alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals	60
Not sure/ I don't know/None/Other/Not applicable	61

How effective or ineffective have these approaches been in the implementation for a holistic or joined-up approach to EDI?

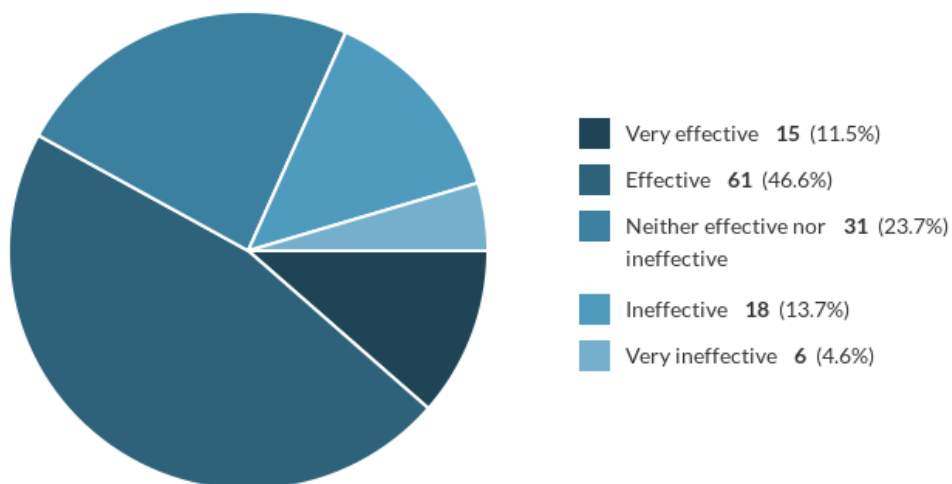
Integrate structures and/or systems for EDI charters



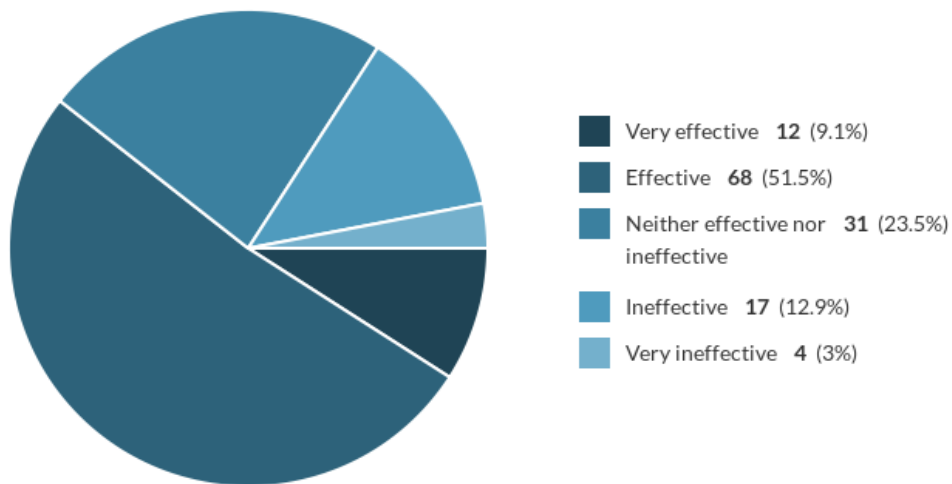
Working in partnership in developing EDI activity, bringing groups, interests and perspectives together



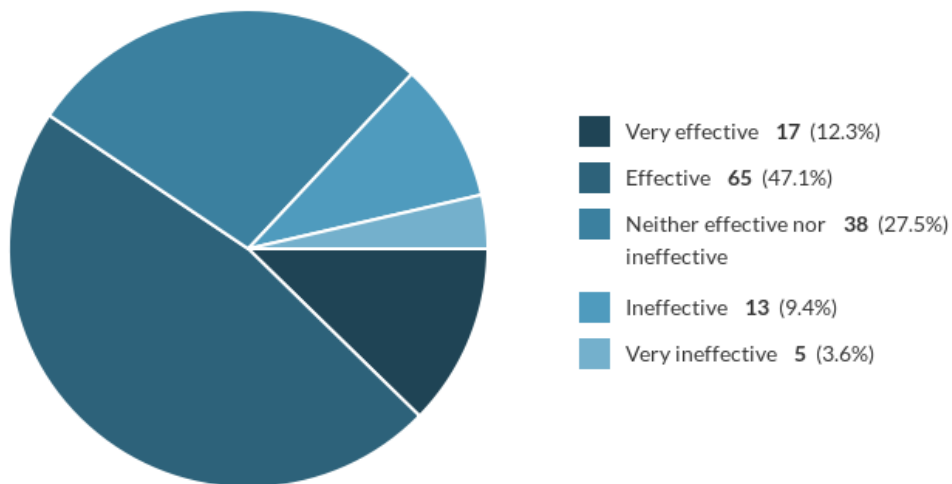
Holistic, integrated or intersectional EDI planning at an organisational level



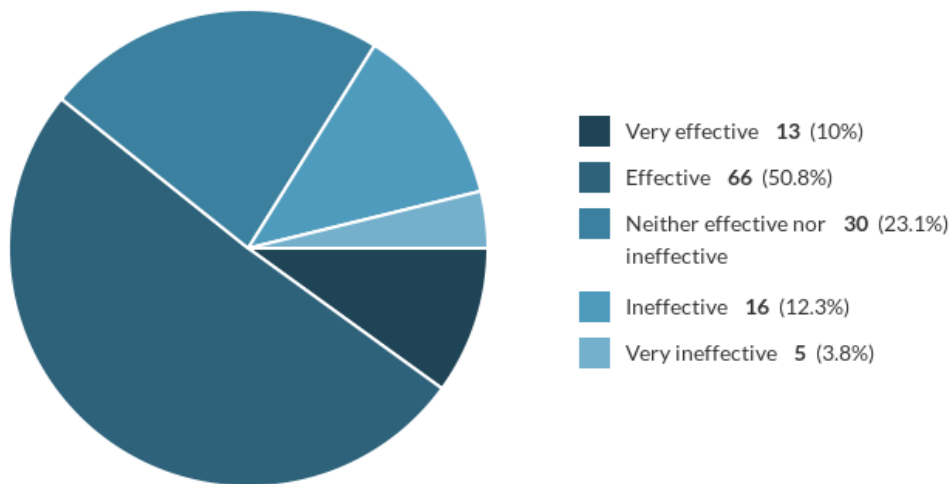
Integrating considerations of areas beyond protected characteristics, such as socio-economic status or poverty, or health and wellbeing, alongside EDI



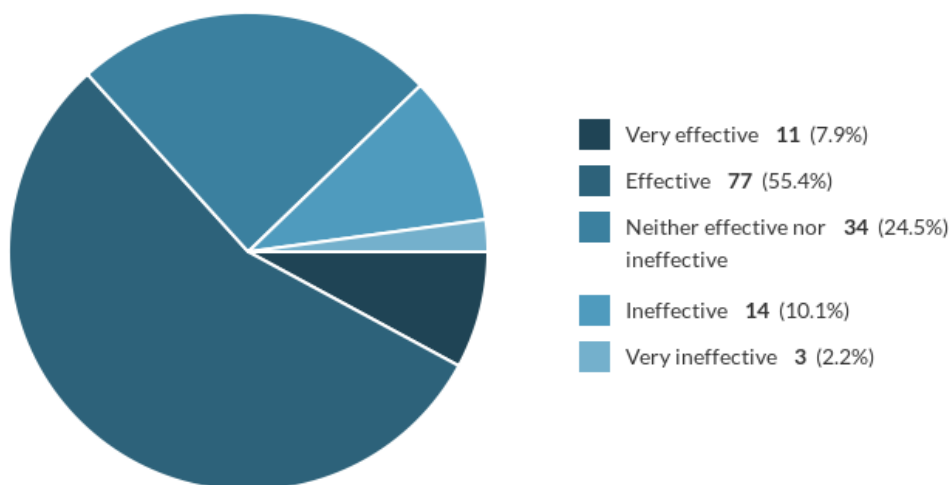
Whole institution approaches beyond Advance HE's charters in gender and race equality, such as disability or LGBT+ inclusion



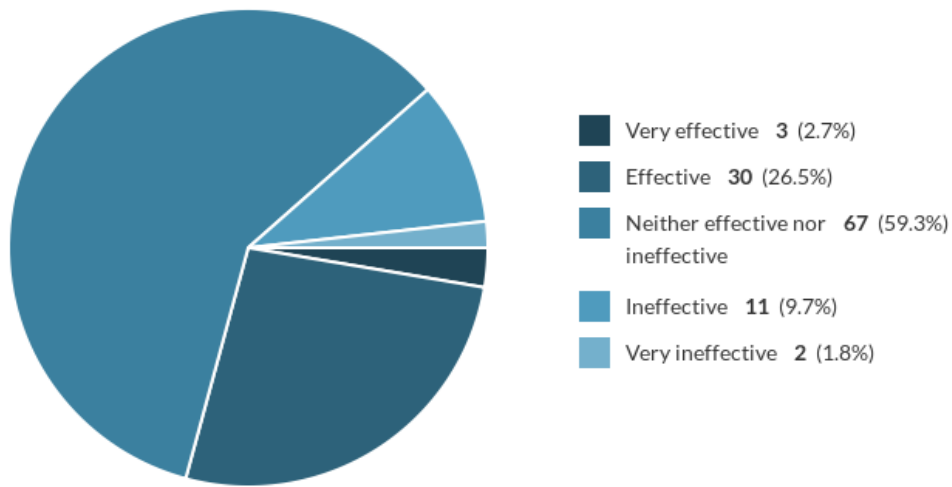
Use of data and evidence across and beyond the protected characteristics to identify institutional priorities



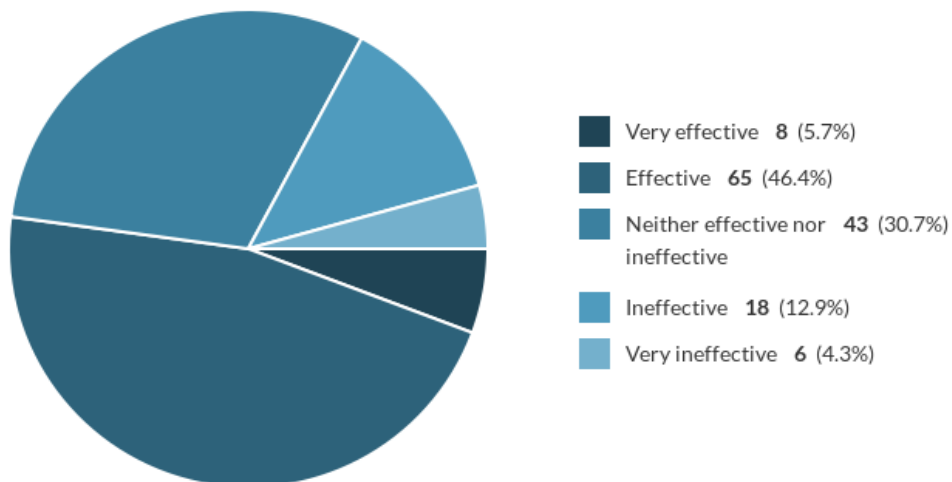
Alignment with Public Sector Equality Duty requirements, such as equality objectives or outcomes



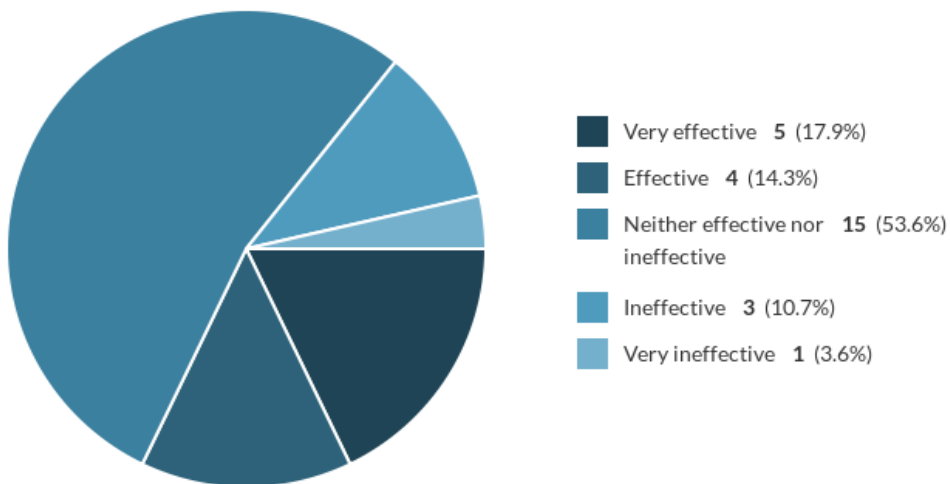
Alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals



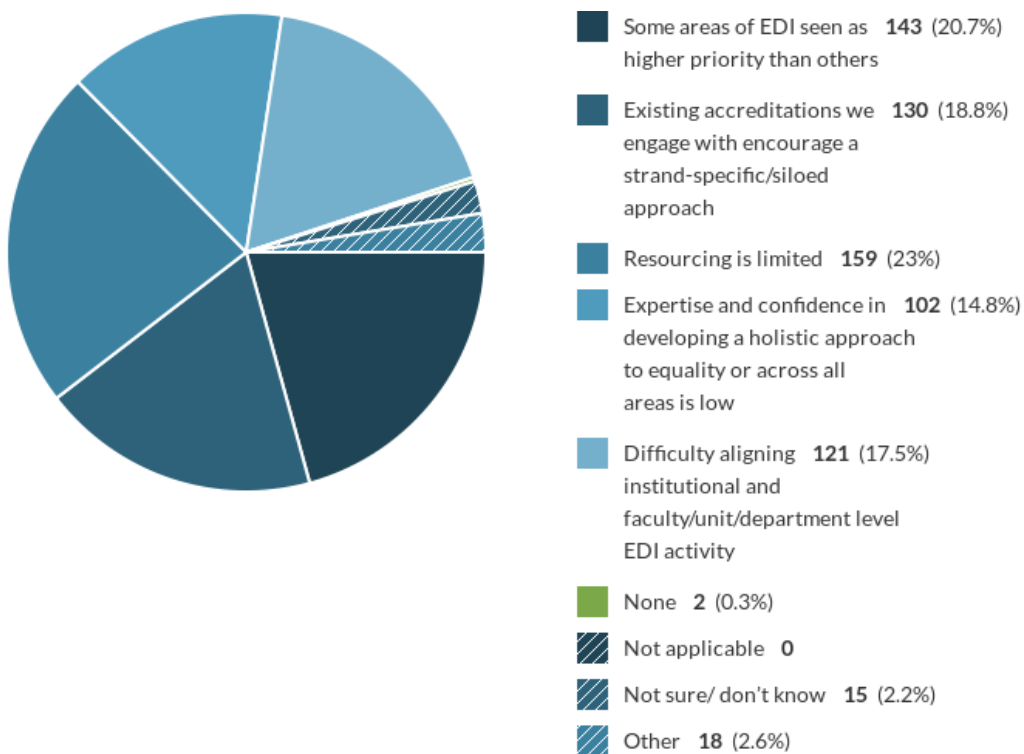
Use of equality analysis/impact assessment to embed EDI considerations across strategy, policy and practice



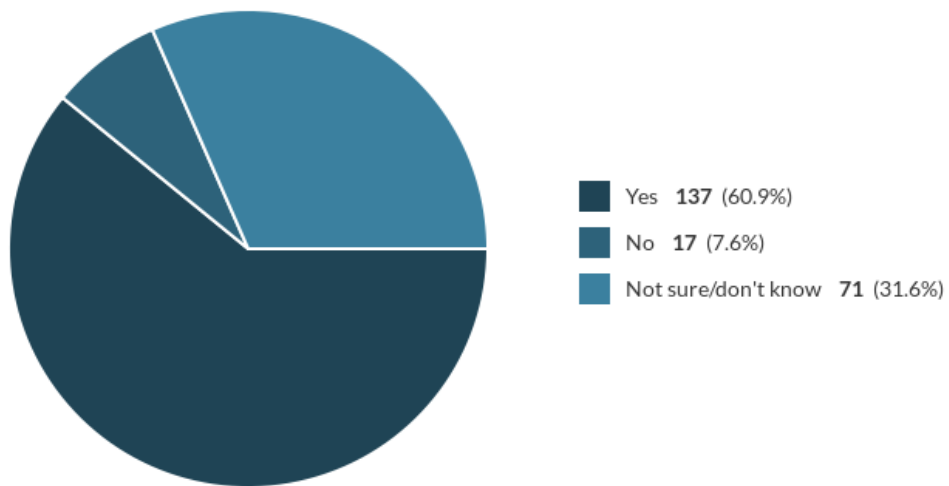
Other



What challenges does your institution/organisation experience in taking a holistic or joined-up approach to EDI (if any)?

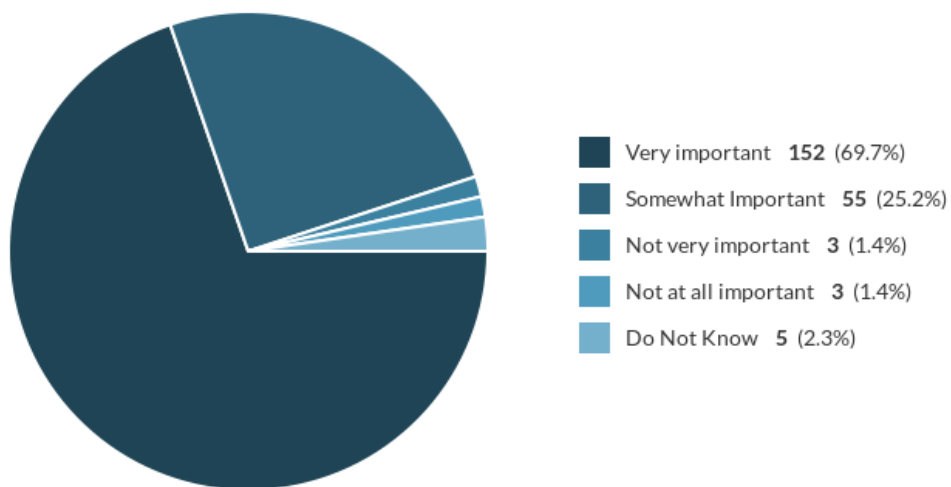


Do you think there is a need for a new approach or option for EDI accreditation within the sector?

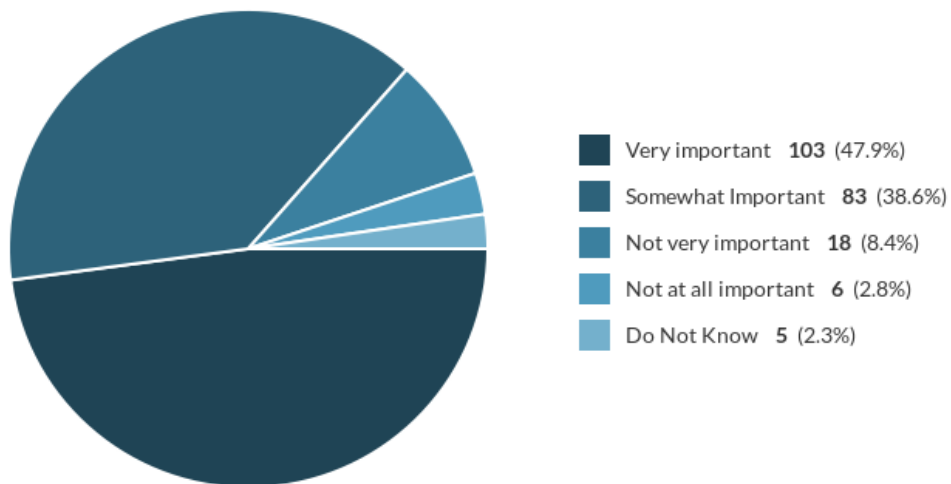


If a new approach to EDI accreditation/recognition were to be developed, in your opinion, how important or not important would the following be...

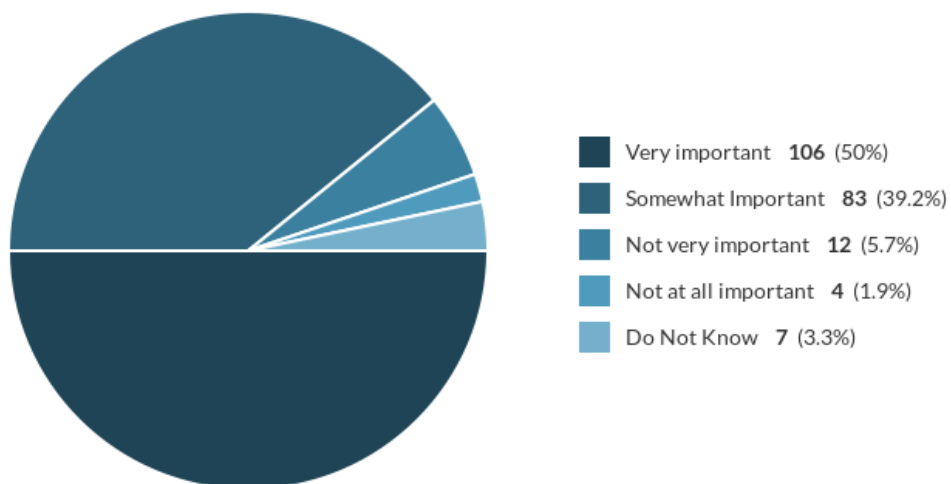
Encouraging institutions to take a more holistic, joined-up approach to EDI



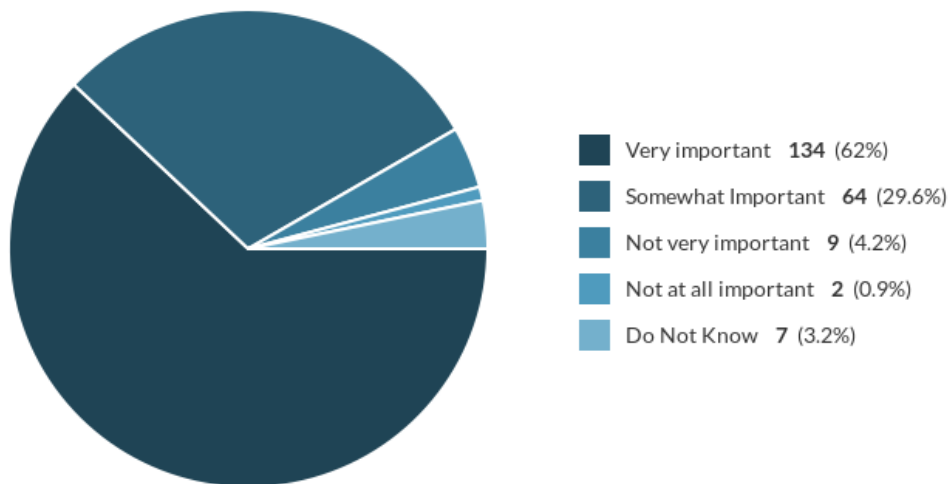
Increased flexibility for institutions to focus on the institutional and local evidence to identify EDI priorities that matter most to them



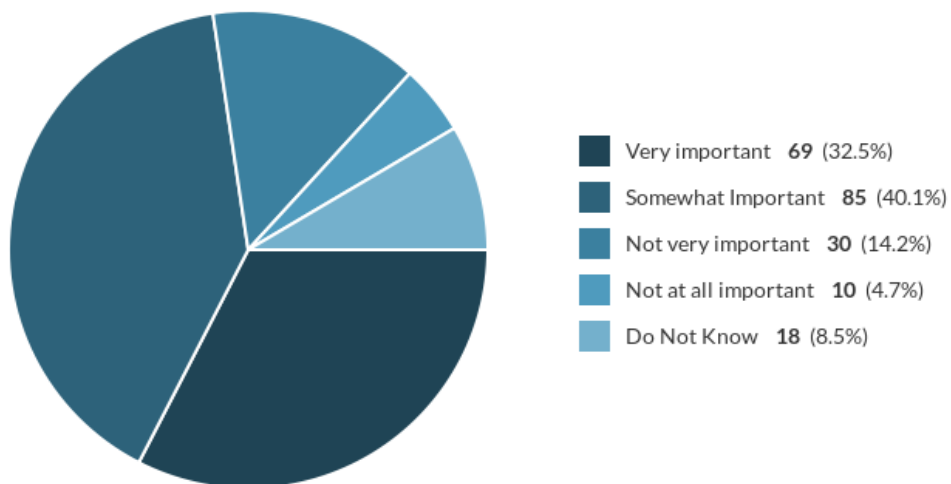
Encouraging institutions to give attention to each area of EDI



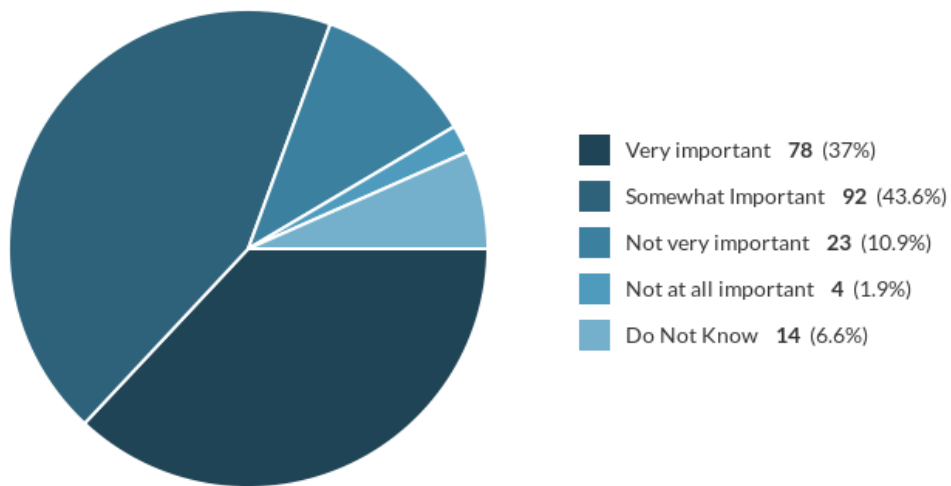
Enabling increased rigour and recognition in addressing EDI priorities beyond gender and race, such as disability, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status



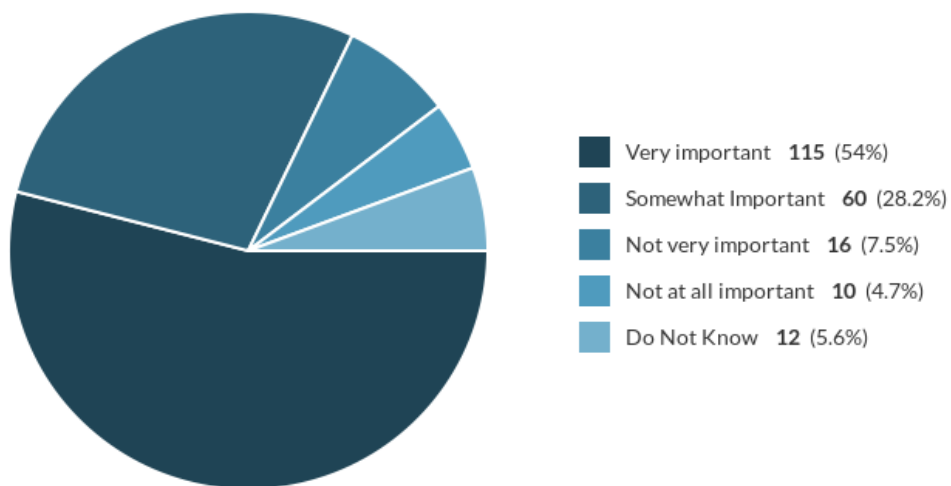
Providing alternatives to other accreditation schemes focused on particular protected groups and/or filling gaps where no accreditation options currently exist



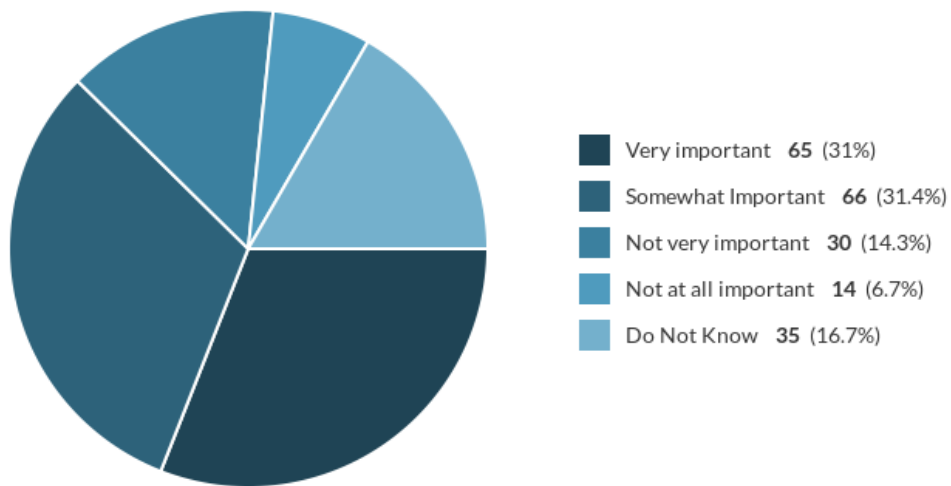
Supporting institutions to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty and specific duties more holistically



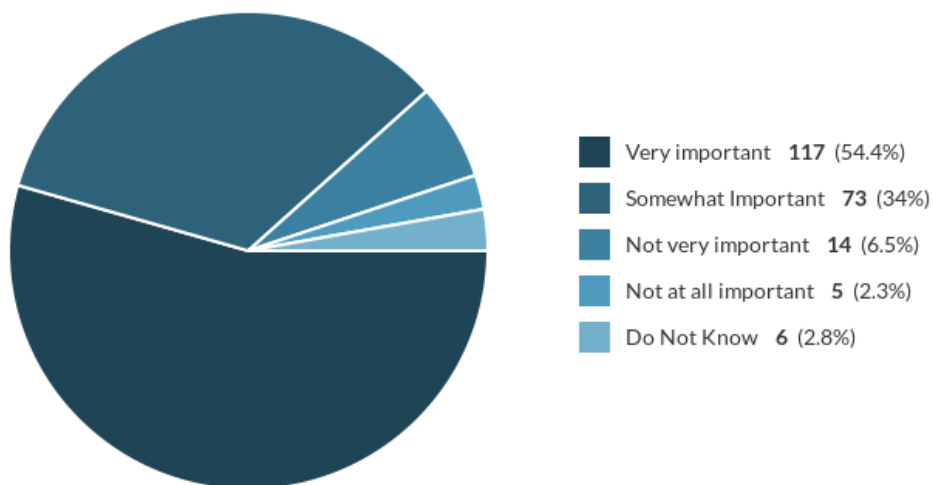
Improved efficiency and a streamlined accreditation process for institutions



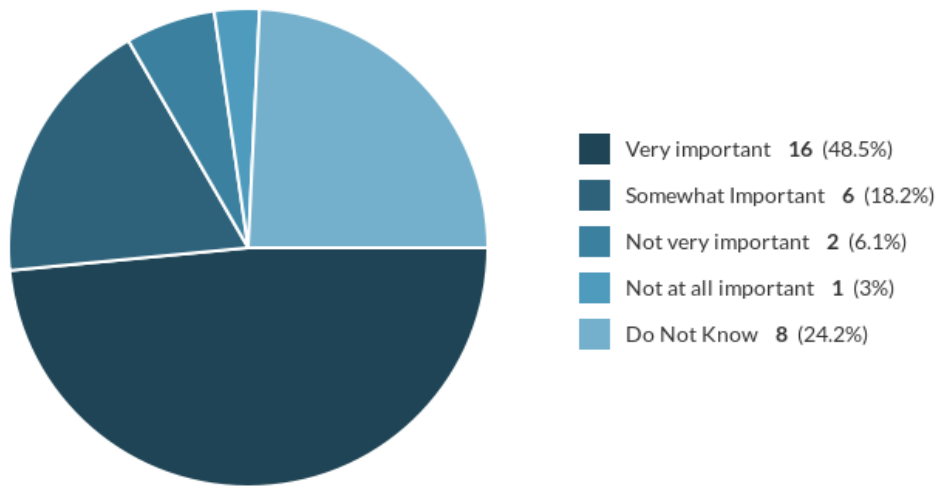
The opportunity to extend EDI accreditation to a wider group of institutions working in HE, such as small and specialist institutions and colleges



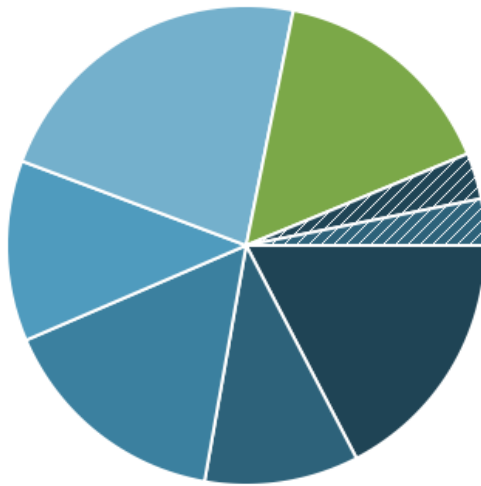
The opportunity to share learning on more areas of EDI



Other



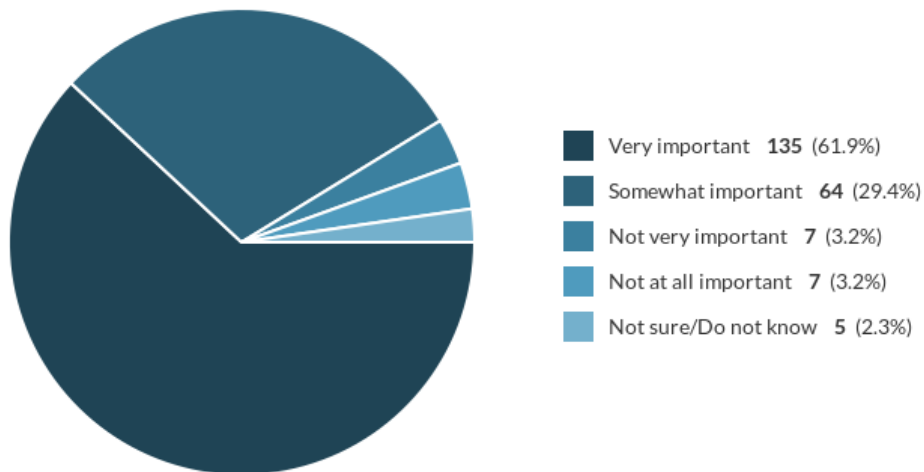
What do you think are the potential risks of Advance HE developing a new option/approach for EDI accreditation/recognition?



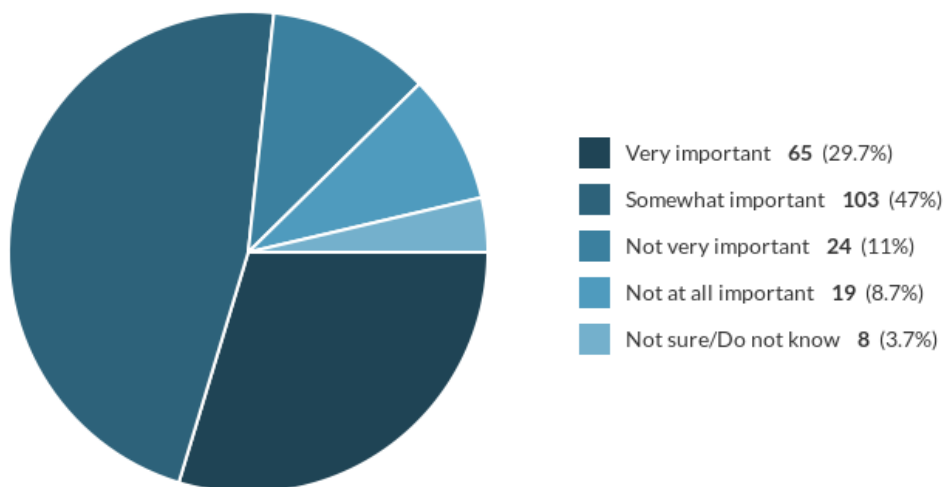
- Dilution of focus and impact on protected characteristic/strand specific priorities such as race or gender equality **117 (17.4%)**
- Loss of reputational and institutional capital built through Athena Swan and REC charters (if institutions choose to move away from them) **70 (10.4%)**
- Duplicating other schemes and awards that focus on aspects of EDI **106 (15.8%)**
- Duplicating other regulatory or funding requirements relating to EDI (e.g. Access and participation plans/Outcome agreements/Fee and Access Plans; Equality Objectives/Outcomes) **82 (12.2%)**
- Increased workload in the short-term if institutions choose to do Athena Swan, REC and use a new form of EDI accreditation **151 (22.4%)**
- Less rigour, e.g. institutions choosing to focus on areas that are 'easier' or they are already performing well on **105 (15.6%)**
- Not sure/don't know **21 (3.1%)**
- Other **21 (3.1%)**

If a new form of institutional EDI accreditation/recognition is developed, how important or not important do you think these principles are in underpinning it?

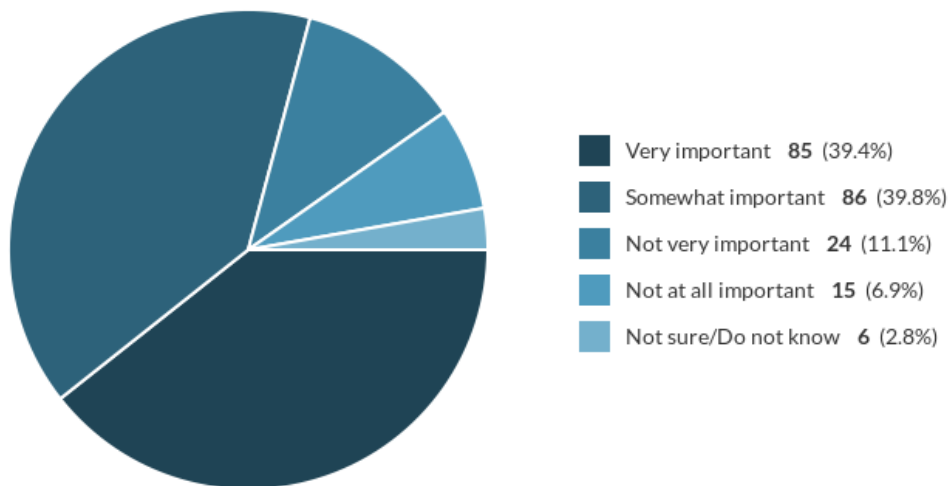
Holistic – covering all areas of EDI/all protected characteristics rather than focusing on just one and/or extending beyond protected characteristics



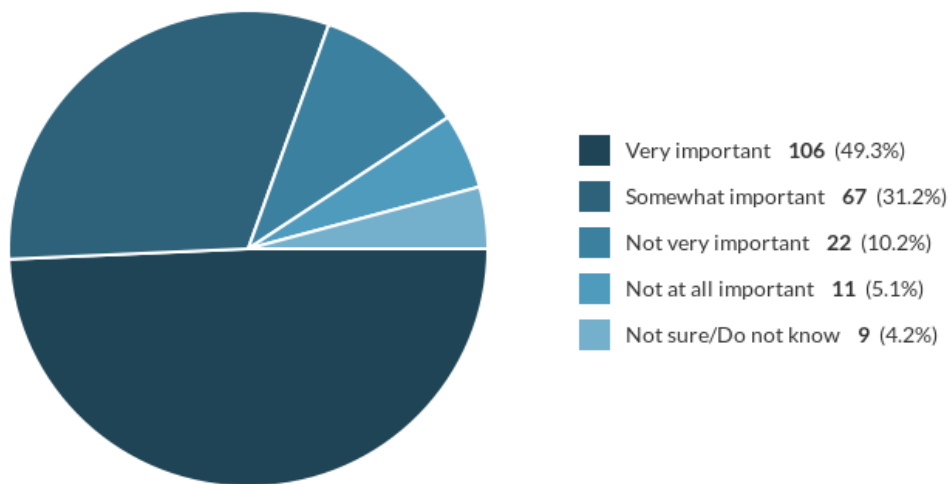
Autonomous/not prescriptive – allowing institutions to focus on their EDI priorities



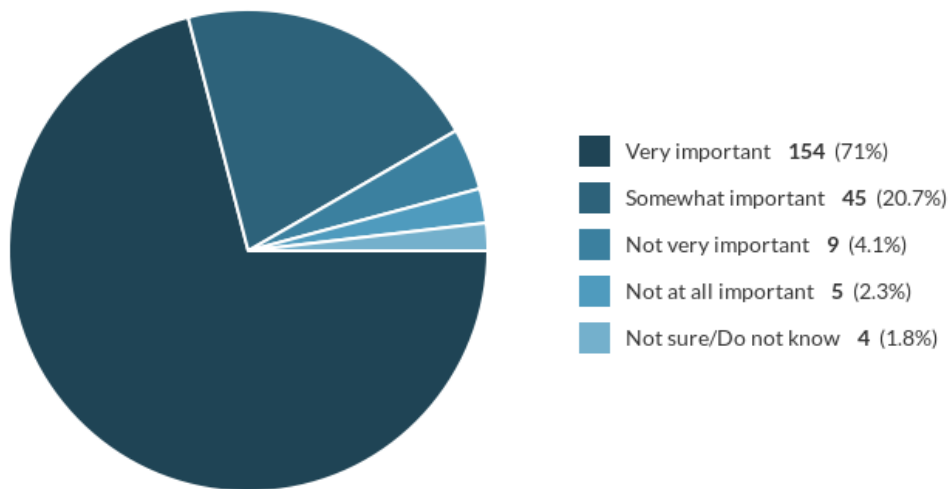
Flexible – allowing institutions to focus on the areas of EDI/protected characteristics identified by the institution



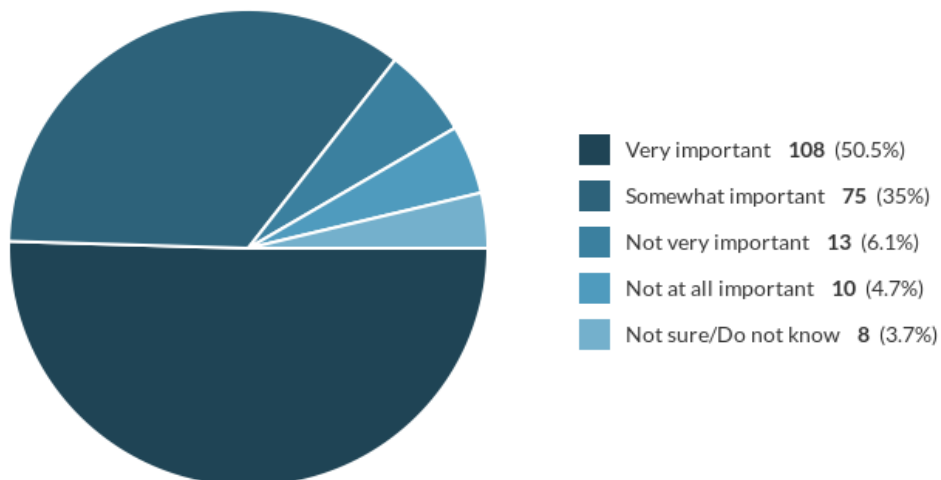
Outcome-focused – based on what outcomes an institution aims to/does achieve in relation to EDI, rather than actions taken



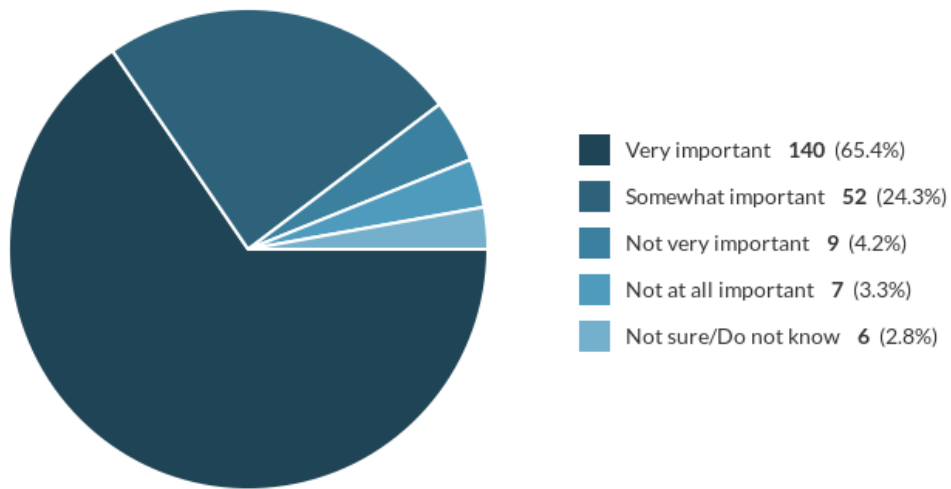
Evidence-based – requiring evidence to inform the identification of EDI priorities, how to address them, and how much progress/success is achieved



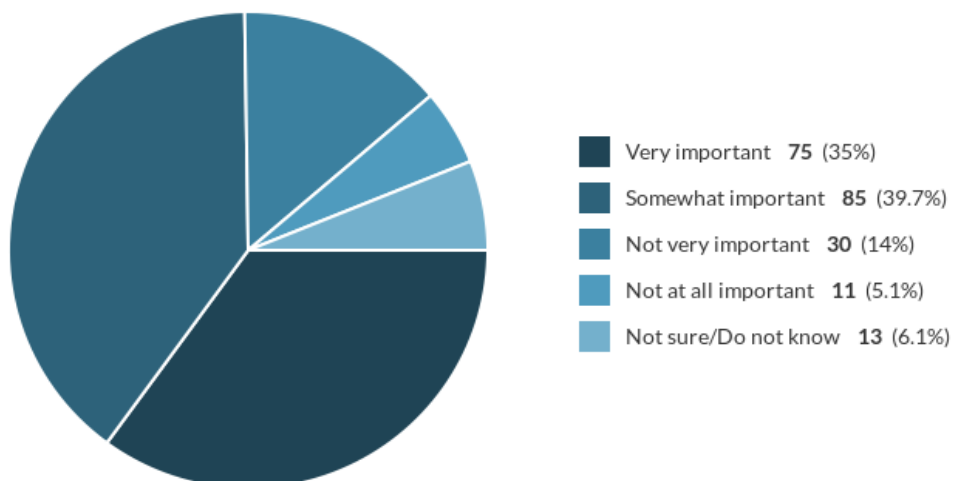
Proportionate – expectations to be proportionate to the size of institution and the scale of problem



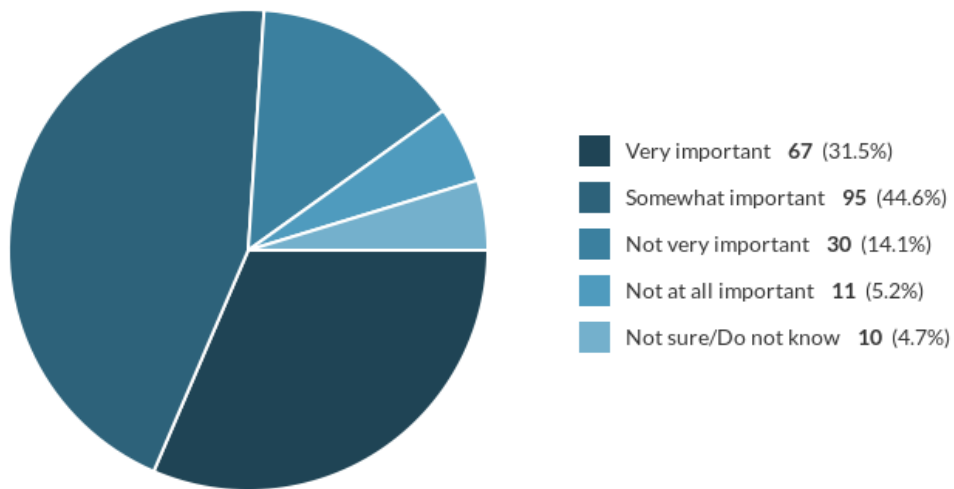
Streamlined – not a burdensome application process for achieving the accreditation



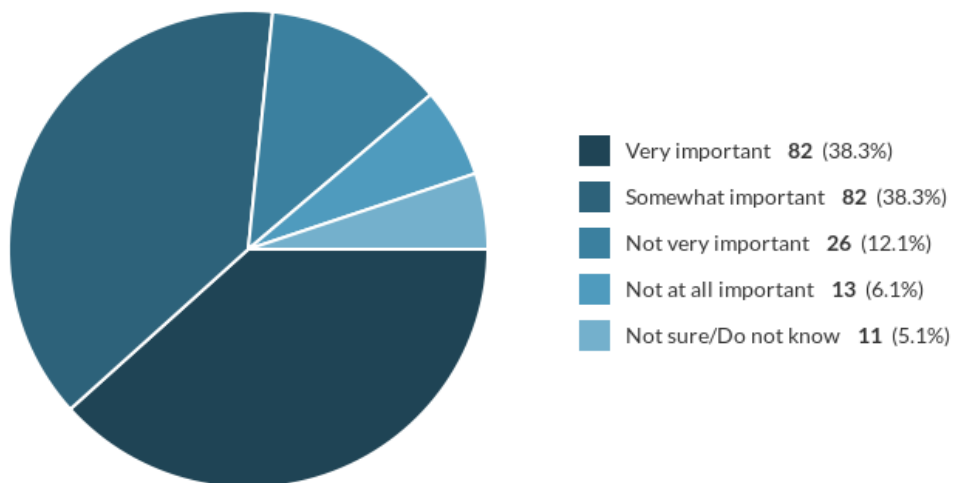
Peer review – outcomes determined by sector representative



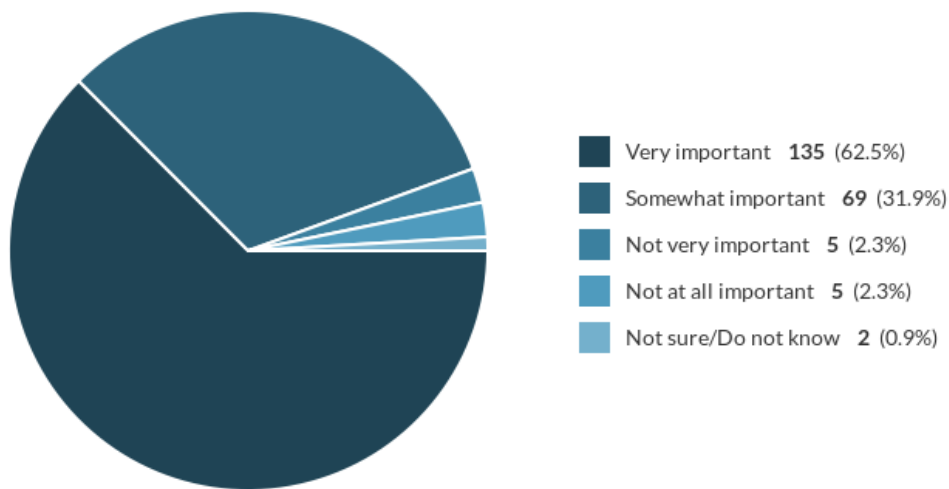
Time-bound – a requirement to deliver in a specific time and evidence progress to retain accreditation



Multi-level – able to be used for institutional and departmental/unit/faculty level



Longitudinal – enabling institutions to commit to long term improvements and measure their progression over time



What core activities do you think should be required to achieve any new approach to EDI accreditation/recognition?

